THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES,

New Series,

VOL. XIV.

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THE

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DEBATES:

FORMING A CONTINUATION OF THE WORK ENTITLED

"THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF ENGLAND,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE YEAR 1803."

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

T. C. HANSARD.

New Series;

COMMENCING WITH THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE IV.

VOL. XIV

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TO

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1826.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.



Parliamentary Debates

During the Seventh Session of the Seventh Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, appointed to meet at Westminster, the Second Day of February 1826, in the Seventh Year of the Reign of His Majesty King GEORGE the Fourth.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, February 2, 1826

THE KING'S SPEECH ON OPENING THE SESSION.] This day the Session was opened by Commission. The place of Lord Chancellor Eldon was, in consequence of indisposition, supplied by lord Gifford. The other commissioners were the earls of Westmorland, Harrowby, and Shaftesbury. The deputy usher of the black rod having been ordered to require the attendance of the House of Commons, he withdrew. In a few minutes after, the Speaker, accompanied by a considerable number of members, having appeared at the bar, lord Gifford opened the session, with the following Speech to both Houses:—

"My Lords and Gentlemen,

"We are commanded by his Majesty to inform you, that his Majesty has seen with regret the embarrassment which has occurred in the pecuniary transactions of the country, since the close of the last session of parliament.

"This embarrassment did not arise from any political events, either at home or abroad: it was not produced by any unexpected demand upon the public resources; nor by the apprehension of any interruption to the general tranquillity.

"Some of the causes to which this evil must be attributed, lie without the reach of direct parliamentary interposition; nor can security against the recurrence of them be found, unless in the experience of the sufferings which they have occasioned.

"But, to a certain portion of this evil, correctives at least, if not effectual remedies, may be applied; and his Majesty relies upon your wisdom to devise such measures as may tend to protect both private and public interests against the like sudden and violent fluctuations, by placing on a more firm foundation the Currency and circulating Credit of the country.

"His Majesty continues to receive from his Allies, and generally from all Foreign princes and states, the strongest assurances of their friendly disposition towards his Majesty. His Majesty, on his part, is constant and unwearied in his endeavours to reconcile conflicting interests, and to recommend and cultivate peace both in the Old world and in the New.

"His Majesty commands us to inform you, that, in pursuance of this policy, his Majesty's mediation has been successfully employed in the conclusion of a treaty between the crowns of Portugal and Brazil, by which the relations of friendly intercourse, long interrupted between two kindred nations, have been restored; and the independence of the Brazilian empire has been formally acknowledged.

"His Majesty loses no opportunity of giving effect to the principles of trade and navigation, which have received the sanction of Parliament, and of establishing

them as far as possible, by engagements with foreign powers.

"His Majesty has directed to be laid before you, a copy of a Convention, framed on these principles, which has recently been concluded between his Majesty and the king of France; and of a similar Convention, with the free Hanseatic cities of Lubec, Bremen, and Hamburgh.

"His Majesty has likewise directed to be laid before you a copy of a Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, concluded between his Majesty and the Republic of Colombia, the ratifications of which have been exchanged since the close of the last Session. For the carrying into effect some of the stipulations of this treaty, his Majesty will have need of your assistance.

"His Majesty regrets that he has not to announce to you the termination of hostilities in India: but the operations of the last campaign, through the bravery of the forces of his Majesty, and of the East India Company, and the skill and perseverance of their commanders, have been attended with uniform success, and his Majesty trusts that a continuance of the same exertions may lead, at no distant period, to an honourable and satisfactory pacification.

"His Majesty's attention has been directed to the consideration of several measures, recommended in the last Session of Parliament, for improving the condition of Ireland.

"The industry of that part of the United Kingdom, his Majesty has the satisfaction of acquainting you, is in a course of gradual and general advancement—an advancement mainly to be attributed to that state of tranquillity which now happily prevails throughout all the provinces of Ireland.

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons.

"His Majesty has directed the estimates for the year to be prepared and laid before you.

"They have been framed with an anxious desire to avoid every Expenditure beyond what the necessary demands of the public service may require.

"His Majesty has the satisfaction of informing you, that the produce of the Revenue, in the last year, has fully justified the expectations entertained at the commencement of it.

"My Lords and Gentlemen,

"His Majesty deeply laments the injurious effects which the late pecuniary crisis must have entailed upon many branches of the commerce and manufactures of the United Kingdom.

"But his Majesty confidently believes that the temporary check which commerce and manufactures may at this moment experience, will, under the blessing of Divine Providence, neither impair the great sources of our wealth, nor impede the growth of national prosperity."

The Commons then withdrew. After which, the Speech being again read by lord Gifford, and also by the Clerk at the table,

The Earl of *Verulam* rose, to move an address to his Majesty, in reply to his most gracious Speech. The noble earl observed, that the Speech from the throne explained to their lordships the political situation of the country, and that it was usual for those who rose for the purpose of proposing to their lordships an address in reply to the royal Speech, to notice the principal topics which it embraced. He did not intend, however, to go into minute details. On all material points, the state of the nation afforded sufficient grounds for congratulation. Whatever unfavourable circumstances he had to notice, were of a temporary nature. He had no series of national calamities to deplore, no protracted war to lament. In general, he had only to call their lordships' attention to the fortunate situation of the country: but it was not to be expected that there would be no disagreeable feature in the picture. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" and their lordships were aware that every state of things was liable to uncertainty and change. Accordingly, the first topic of the Speech related to the late extraordinary and unexpected panic, which had occurred in the pecuniary transactions of the country. It was the more unexpected, because it had occurred at a moment when the

prosperity of the country appeared at its height, and when money abounded to an uncommon extent. This singular embarrassment had not, as was observed in the King's Speech, its origin in any political events. It seemed easy to obtain money for any purpose, and the most extravagant speculations were entered into. He believed it was the difficulty which capitalists experienced in obtaining an adequate interest for their money, which had led to the wild speculations which had taken place—speculations so wild, that it seemed as if the persons engaged in them were indifferent whether they should sink or swim. This over-speculation was the main cause of the distress which had been felt in the commercial world; but it was one which would cure itself, and which, therefore, ought not to be the object of parliamentary interposition. For the consideration of other circumstances connected with the late pecuniary embarrassments, opportunities would arise, and he was confident the evils were not irremediable. His Majesty stated, that he relied upon parliament for the adoption of measures calculated to protect the public against sudden and violent fluctuations; and he hoped their lordships would soon proceed to the consideration of the important subject. The way in which the panic had been met by merchants, bankers, and individuals of property, was a circumstance of great congratulation, and must induce their lordships to turn their attention to the great object recommended by his Majesty; namely, the placing the credit of the country on a more firm foundation. It was to be hoped that adventurers and speculators would take warning from the past, and in future be guided by wisdom and moderation in their schemes. Their lordships would perceive from his Majesty's Speech, that the termination of hostilities in India could not be announced. The war in that quarter of the world had been undertaken to maintain the national character. The military operations had hitherto been attended with success. The war had not for its object any extension of our empire in India; its only purpose was to obtain a secure and honourable peace. Their lordships would readily concur with him in congratulating his Majesty on another part of his Speech, which related to foreign affairs. He alluded to that part in which his Majesty informed parliament, that he continued to receive from his allies, and generally from all foreign powers, assurances of a friendly disposition. The noble earl concluded by calling their lordships' attention to the last paragraph of his Majesty's Speech, which, he said, stated his own sentiments with respect to the late embarrassments, in the conviction it expressed, that the temporary check which our commerce and manufactures might at this moment experience would, under the blessing of Divine Providence, neither impair the great sources of our wealth, nor impede the growth of national prosperity. He then moved an Address, which was, as usual, an echo of the Speech from the throne.

Lord *Sheffield*, in rising to second the Address, said it was not necessary for him to trespass on their lordships' indulgence at any great length, after the able manner in which his noble friend had brought forward the motion. He must, however, beg leave to make a few observations. It appeared to him, that the late pecuniary distress had arisen out of the peace and prosperity of the country, which, by creating a great accumulation of capital, induced persons to speculate to excess. The distress, however, was by no means general, and he congratulated their lordships that in all the manufacturing districts the spirit of combination among the working classes had entirely disappeared, and they had now returned to their usual habits of peaceful industry. He also congratulated their lordships, that the agricultural interest had met with no material check by the recent difficulties. Among the topics contained in the Speech there were many on which he might congratulate their lordships in common with his noble friend. It was highly gratifying to find that Colombia had finally established her independence, and that we had entered into friendly relations with that state, as well as with others in the same hemisphere. As to the war in India, it was well known that the principles on which it was carried on were sanctioned by the highest authorities in this country. With respect to that part of the Speech which adverted to the improved state of Ireland, he rejoiced to find that the measures introduced last session had been found effectual in reference to the administration of justice, education, and general

improvement. The best proof of the efficacy of those measures was to be found in the tranquillity that now prevailed throughout every part of Ireland. Having thus briefly expressed his sentiments, he should sit down in the confident hope that their lordships would not hesitate to agree to the Address.

Lord *King* said, that the noble mover and seconder of the Address had both mentioned the present embarrassments, but he did not find that either of them had said a word on the causes which led to them. He would endeavour to supply the omission. The causes were, in some degree, to be attributed to the government; in a greater degree, to the country banks; and in a still greater degree to the Bank of England monopoly. He would tell their lordships how the government caused this mischief. It had prolonged the existence of the one and two pound notes. It had passed a law to allow of country banks issuing them. The measure permitting this was the measure of ministers. As far as the present evil arose from the bankers issuing such notes, to this degree it had been caused by his Majesty's government. There was also a strong tendency in the measures of ministers to reduce the rate of interest; and for this purpose, the one and two pound note bill had been passed. They had reduced the rate of interest on Exchequer bills, in order to promote a great future reduction of interest. Their conduct reminded him of the memorable speech of a memorable ex-chancellor of the Exchequer, in which that noble lord had stated, that it would be no benefit, if every individual, when he awoke in the morning, found a guinea in his pocket; but it would be a great benefit if he found the rate of interest reduced when he awoke. Such was the sentiment of the accredited organ of government, and ministers now seemed to think that it was no benefit that wealth should be spread abroad amongst all the people, but a great benefit that it should be collected into heaps. The ex-chancellor would be a proper organ for the projectors of last year, who removed the useless guinea out of the people's pocket, and supplied its place by receipts for stock or scrip for loans. He would recommend the people, as the proper use of such paper, to subscribe it to build a monument to this ex-chancellor of the Exchequer. He had said, that the Bank of England had contributed to the distress; and he did not know any period of distress for the last thirty or fifty years, in which the conduct of that establishment had not been injurious. Let their lordships look back, and they would find, that the conduct of the Bank of England had, in every case, aggravated the distress by its conduct. It was a most faulty machine. It was impossible that a Bank so incorporated could do good. If their lordships were to set about erecting an establishment to do mischief, they would erect it on the very principles which governed that corporation; they would give it a monopoly, remove from it all fear of rivalry, and they would connect it with the government. The directors had no interest in the profit or loss of the concern; they had neither hopes nor fears for the result of their conduct; they had no interest in managing it well, but they had a strong interest in mismanaging it. The machine was altogether too vast to be well conducted; and this appeared to him one of the strongest reasons which could be urged for putting an end to the monopoly. The Bank, it might be supposed, had not produced the late crisis; but he contended that it was art and part in the whole. It had increased the issues of Bank notes at the beginning of last year. He did not say this on his own authority, but on the authority of the best-informed merchants in the city of London. Mr. Tooke had stated, in a book which well deserved their lordships' attention, that the issues of the Bank of England amounted, in April, 1823, to 17,750,473*l.*; in April, 1824, 19,011,575*l.*; and in April, 1825, to 20,881,123*l.* This was a very considerable increase, amounting, as stated by Mr. Tooke, in the year 1825, to an increase, in the Bank circulation, of three millions, as compared with the issue of 1823. He could not better express the effect this had had on the country than in the words of the author—"Speculative operations, embracing so many commodities of great importance, in point of amount, necessarily created a large mass of paper, and of transactions on mere credit, thus adding to a circulation already swelled by the increase of country bank notes. Such were the circumstances under which the Bank of England issued, and for some months maintained in circulation, an increased amount of its notes. Although this increased issue by the Bank did not alone cause the great additional excite-

ment of the spirit of speculation which followed it, yet it gave a fresh and powerful stimulant to that spirit, and assisted in converting incipient delusion into absolute insanity." The noble earl opposite was willing, he believed, to control the conduct of the Bank, but he had found the Bank too strong for him. The noble earl also had been willing to prevent the issue of the one and two pound Bank notes, but he had found the country bankers and the country gentlemen too strong for him. They wanted these notes to keep up prices and encourage speculation. The noble earl was not strong enough for these gentlemen; and he was afraid he would not be strong enough to carry the measure which he had talked of last session for revising the Corn laws. The noble earl had then stated distinctly, that he meant, this session, to revise the Corn laws; and he should like to know if he really meant to do any thing on the subject of those laws? [The earl of Liverpool stated, across the table, that he would answer that question by and by]. He was afraid, from the looks of the noble earl, that nothing was to be done this session with the Corn laws. The noble earl was probably afraid of again meeting with such a signal defeat as he had met with last year on the Canada Corn bill. That defeat was a disgrace which could never be wiped out. The measure was a measure of government; it had passed the Commons, and was brought up to their lordships. Then came down a noble earl to oppose it. The noble earl opposite had implored him to allow it to pass for a year and a half. No; it could not be. For a year, then; and a year was granted to the government. This was the most disgraceful proceeding he had ever witnessed. Let their lordships only suppose a lord A, or a lord B, opposing a ministerial measure brought up from the other House, under the ministry of Mr. Pitt or lord Grenville;—the thing was impossible. It reminded him of Charles 2nd complaining to the Dutch ambassador, that his government was not treated with the same respect by the Dutch as that of Cromwell:—"Your majesty must recollect," replied the ambassador, "that Cromwell was a very different sort of a man." So, if the ministers were to remind noble lords of the way in which they conducted themselves towards Mr. Pitt or lord Grenville, the reply might be, "but you are very different sort of men." He feared the country could have no hopes of seeing any alteration in the Corn laws this session. If that were so, he was persuaded that nothing but discussion, repeated discussion, could produce any good; and he was resolved on every occasion to express his opinion on this most detestable law. It was the most gigantic job ever practised. It was difficult to say which was greatest, the unfeeling avarice which suggested it, or the bold impudence which stated that it was for the public good. It was the most enormous job ever heard of in the whole history of misrule. The West India job only made us pay more for our sugar. The East India job, when Leadenhall-street was in the fulness of its power, and monopolized all the trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope, without a rival, was in comparison nothing to the job of the Corn laws. Many references had of late been made to that branch of the legitimate house of Bourbon which ruled in Spain, and which had been held up as the most foolish of all God's vicegerents on earth; but what had they done equal in folly to our Corn laws? They had given to one man the monopoly of the trade of Buenos Ayres; they might have given to one city the monopoly of all the trade of Mexico and Peru, but the Spanish monarchs, who were held up as a sort of scare-crows to bad governments, and were of more use dead than living, had granted no monopoly half so monstrous or half so mischievous as the monopoly of food. This was a job of the landed interest; and he would repeat, that it was the most gigantic job to be found in the whole history of misrule. It was not possible the Corn laws should be continued. Both justice and policy required their repeal. He believed that to be the only assembly on the face of the earth in which it was necessary to prove the advantages of cheap food. Their lordships were sharp-sighted enough on some occasions, and had speedily perceived the necessity of a law to punish those who broke machines. But why were the breakers of machines to be put down? because machines saved labour. All our wealth, all our productive power, depended on the employment of machines; and if they were valuable, how was it that cheap food was an injury? If food was cheap, labour was cheap. But the Corn laws compelled us to have recourse

to more labour to produce food. This must be the case while we were obliged to cultivate bad soils, when we might obtain food from good soils; and the Corn laws ought to be put down like machine breakers. It was stated by some that the difference of prices was so great upon the continent, as compared with this country, that ruin must be the consequence of allowing an unrestricted importation to take place. But he would deny the fact. If they could show him that there was a considerable difference in the prices, which he did not believe, then he would say, that in proportion as the landholder gained, the consumer lost, and that by persisting in restrictive measures, in order to keep up the price, they proclaimed their own avarice and injustice. Their lordships were all aware, that that celebrated voyager, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, on giving an account of that august assembly to the king of Brogdignag, had told him that they were always occupied for the good of the country. Now if, instead of such an account he had informed him that they were always occupied in contriving to keep up the price of corn, then indeed his majesty's answer would have been a just one, when he observed, that we were the most contemptible race of little reptiles, and our rulers the most selfish and unjust. As to the prosperity of the country, he believed the one thing needful with respect to it was a revision of the Corn laws. Indeed, he felt the conviction of its necessity so strongly, that he felt himself bound to move an amendment, expressive of an opinion to that effect. His lordship, accordingly, concluded with an Amendment, pledging the House to take into consideration, at an early period, the propriety of revising the Corn laws, as the best means of securing the prosperity of the country.

Earl *Grosvenor* said, that although the subject was one of the utmost importance, still he was not at present prepared to go so far as his noble friend who spoke last. However desirable it might be to agitate the question at some future period, he could not at present support the amendment. His object in rising was, to say a few words in reference to the Speech from the throne. He must, however, premise, that he felt much regret that his Majesty was not able to attend in person, for the purpose of opening the session. He feared the circumstance arose from indisposition; if so, he should greatly regret it. It could not, however, have been very agreeable to his Majesty, to deliver a Speech, which necessarily made allusion to a state of things, not the most agreeable. It certainly was very different from those which they had been of late years in the habit of hearing. Enough, however, was held out to encourage hope, and there were some points touched upon with an expression of satisfaction. Indeed, there was generally upon such occasions too great a disposition to introduce topics of congratulation, in place of pointing out the real state of the country. Such a speech as that which their lordships had just heard from the throne, was much more creditable to ministers, than one of empty congratulation. There were some points in it to which he was desirous to advert. In the first place, his Majesty recommended that the circulating currency of the country should be placed on a more firm foundation. Now, he could not see how it could be put on a more firm foundation than that on which, by law, it stood at present. They were thus led to believe, that some legislative measure was to be introduced on the subject, or something done towards relieving the present distresses. It would be highly satisfactory if they were made acquainted with the nature of the measures which ministers had in contemplation. There was another point to which he must advert. His Majesty informed them, that the revenue fully justified the expectations that were formed of it last session. This, as it appeared to him, required some explanation. All they knew at present was, that there was an actual deficiency of revenue in the present year, as compared with the last. How, then, was the passage in his Majesty's Speech to be explained? Perhaps ministers did not anticipate a larger revenue than that actually received, and would account for the deficiency by the duties that had been taken off last session; or perhaps, having foreseen the difficulties that had arisen in the money market, they, in consequence, calculated upon some deficiency in the revenue. He saw no other means in which the passage in the Speech could be explained. The impression on his mind, produced by all that had lately taken place, was, that to relieve the country from its difficulties, they must have recourse to that economical system which he had for so many

years been ineffectually recommending. Whether the present embarrassments arose from over-trading, an over-issue of paper, or any other cause, he knew not; but of this there was no doubt, that the revenue had decreased. The same causes might recur again, and the same consequence follow. The only way of guarding against such an inconvenience was by a system of retrenchment and economy. By no other means could the country ever hope to see an efficient sinking fund. Had they commenced upon a principle of retrenchment ten years back, and acted upon it steadily, how different would the state of the country now be! Instead of a sinking fund of 5,000,000*l.*, it might have been eight, ten, or even twelve millions; and thus would not only a great part of the interest of the public debt have been got rid of, but a considerable part of the principal. There was not a single branch of their expenditure in which retrenchment should not have been introduced long ago; but the largest reductions should have been made in the standing army. There was no reason on earth, why the army should not have been greatly reduced, as had been the case on the termination of all former wars. This was also most important in a constitutional point of view. What was this large army wanted for? At one time, the cause assigned was the existence of a party called the radicals. But, did their lordships not recollect the events that took place at Manchester? There a more numerous body than had, perhaps, ever assembled upon any former occasion, met together. They created considerable alarm; but, formidable as they appeared, they were dispersed by a handful of yeomanry. Was not this a sufficient proof that the peace of the country might be preserved without such a large and unconstitutional army as the country was called upon to support? Had we husbanded our resources, how much better able should we now be to meet the expenses of the disastrous war in India. He did not know to whose counsels that war was to be attributed, but this he would say, that they had much to answer for, unless they could shew clearly, that it was founded on necessity and justice. Then, with regard to Ireland. Those had much to answer for who refused to concur in a measure which would have effectually secured the peace of that unhappy country, and rendered a large military force unnecessary. How was it possible, while the great bulk of the population were kept in their present state of exclusion, that there could be tranquillity or content? He rejoiced, however, at the prospect of any measures that might tend to better the condition of that country. But, nothing could be permanently advantageous, until the Catholics participated in all the constitutional privileges of their fellow-subjects. This being once done, they might safely draw off the immense standing army which they now found it necessary to maintain for the purpose of overawing the people. Though not prepared to support the amendment of his noble friend, he had felt it his duty to throw out these few observations.

Lord *Teynham* said, he should oppose the amendment. With respect to the Corn laws, it should be recollected that the country was at present in an artificial state; that we were subject to an enormous taxation; and that while such was the case, it was not to be expected that the grower of corn here could compete with the foreign grower upon any thing like equal terms. The agricultural interest had been always anxious to lighten the distresses of the other classes of the community. The difficulties of the present time did not arise from the corn laws, but were mainly to be attributed to that spirit of ruinous speculation which had unfortunately taken possession of the country. He did not see how the present military establishment could be reduced, consistently with the best interests of the country. He trusted that, in conformity with the suggestion thrown out in the Speech from the throne, such measures would be adopted as would prevent the recurrence of the difficulties which had lately been experienced in the money-market.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, he did not rise for the purpose of at present discussing the unfortunate topic which formed so prominent a part of the Speech from the throne, for it would be impossible for the House to enter upon that topic, without having received any information respecting the nature of the views and intentions of his Majesty's government. It was a subject upon which he could not say any thing, without saying a great deal; he would not, therefore, now attempt to inquire how far that measure would be obliged to receive re-consideration, which authorized the issuing of 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes;

how far the present embarrassments were owing to that measure, to the other laws relating to banks, and to the monopoly of the Bank of England; or how far any of these causes had produced the evil now admitted to exist. All he meant to do at present was, to claim a complete reserve on the part of himself and of the House, as to their opinion respecting the possibility of the application of any corrective, or of that in particular which seemed to be contemplated by the king's government. He did not even wish to call on the noble earl opposite to state more particularly at present the nature of his proposed corrective, because he did not think that the address pledged the House to any thing upon that subject. The case was the same with respect to the Corn laws. Not that he did not think it would be incumbent on their lordships, and the members of the other House of parliament, to express their distinct opinion upon these subjects; but that they were not called on to do so in the absence of that information which he believed his majesty's government had been endeavouring to procure. The same observation applied to the state of the currency, as well as of prices in this country, because he believed it would be impossible to separate these questions from each other, and also from the question of free trade. Having said this, he trusted he had said enough to preclude himself, and he hoped others, from entering upon the discussion of these topics at present, leaving it to the noble earl, if so disposed, but not at all pressing him, to state more particularly the nature of his intentions upon the subject; and also whether he had any measure in view respecting the state of Ireland.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that he did not feel himself warranted in intruding on the attention of the House for the purpose of entering into a discussion upon the several very important topics which naturally grew out of the Speech from the throne, and which undoubtedly involved questions of the greatest political interest. After the statement made by the noble marquis, he certainly did not conceive himself called upon to enter upon the consideration of those important points on the present occasion. At the same time he considered it necessary, with respect to a question of so much political interest, that he should use no reserve—not as to details, for it would be impossible to treat of them with effect at that moment—but as to the general nature of the measures which it might be the disposition of government to propose. He would therefore trouble their lordships with a very short statement. In the first place, however, he would call their attention to this circumstance, that the convulsions in the pecuniary transactions of the country were not unexpected by him or by other members of his majesty's government. Their lordships might recollect that in March last, he would not say he took, he created almost, an occasion of stating to their lordships what, sooner or later, would be the effect of the rash spirit of speculation which then existed in the country, and of giving notice, in a few words, to their lordships and the country, that if the consequences which he predicted did arise, the relief which had been applied on former occasions would not again be applied to meet the new evil. He had given that warning, in anticipation of what was to come. He had told those persons who, by rash speculation, might become involved in distress and ruin, that they must abide by the consequences of their own acts, and that they would have no right to expect from government and parliament that relief which had been afforded on some former occasions. A noble baron had adverted to what he conceived to be the causes of the recent events. When the proper opportunity arrived, he would not be disposed to avoid discussion on that point. There was one cause, however, so prominent and so great in magnitude, that even if he were disposed to allow that other circumstances might have acted in the way of aggravation, yet this cause was so complete in itself, that it was sufficient to account for all that had happened. Their lordships knew the general spirit of mad speculation which had prevailed in the country during the last two years, and they would at the same time recollect his having stated, on the occasion to which he had before referred, that that spirit was not confined to the metropolis alone, but was extending itself all over the country through the medium of the country banks. It must be evident that, from the peculiar nature of the circulation of country bank notes, it was extremely difficult to state precisely what was the amount of that circulation at any particular period. But there was a document which showed the progressive state of the country banks' circulation with sufficient accuracy to serve the purposes of general reasoning. All

country bank notes required to be stamped; and therefore parliament had it in its power to call for a return of the number stamped for each banker. Now, it appeared from a return, which would be laid on their lordships' table, that in the years 1821, 1822, and 1823, the average number of notes stamped in each year was four millions and one or two hundred thousand. He spoke of their value, not of their numerical amount. The difference between particular years within that period, never amounted to more than one or two hundred thousand pounds—a difference which might easily be accounted for by incidental circumstances. In 1824, when the spirit of mad speculation to which he had referred first began to prevail, the amount of country bank notes increased to about 6,000,000*l.*; and, in 1825, it increased to more than 8,000,000*l.*, being double what it was in 1821, 1822, and 1823. Was it not sufficient to state that fact to their lordships, to account completely for all the evil effects of over-trading and rash speculation upon the general interests of the country? He did not deny that, during the same period, there had been some increase of the Bank of England paper; but it bore no proportion whatever to the increase in the general circulation of the country banks. The noble lord who commenced the debate had accused ministers of having participated in causing the existing embarrassments, by endeavouring to lower the rate of interest. If ministers had introduced any forced measures which could operate to lower the rate of interest, such conduct would have been highly blameable; but he denied that ministers had done any thing of the kind. What were the facts? There was a rise in the price of public securities, and a lower rate of interest, the consequences of continued peace and the prosperous state of the country. Government would have been highly reproachable, if they had not taken advantage of those favourable circumstances, in order to reduce the burthens of the people. By the measures which they adopted, they had been able to take off 1,800,000*l.* of taxes, and to reduce the interest of the national debt, in the first instance to the extent of 1,400,000*l.* and subsequently of 150,000*l.* a year.—He had very shortly stated these points, because he might have occasion hereafter to go more into detail, when it would be his duty to endeavour, in some degree, to point out a remedy for the present state of things. He agreed with that part of his Majesty's Speech which stated, that for the effects of over-trading, and rash speculation growing out of the prosperity of the country, no cure could be found in legislation, and that it was only to be found in individuals having a due sense of the danger and inconvenience to which they exposed themselves by such acts. But, he likewise concurred with the declaration in the royal Speech, that correctives and palliatives might and ought to be applied for the present distress. It was no fault of his noble friend near him (lord Bexley) nor of himself, that the measures which it was the intention of ministers to bring under the consideration of parliament had not been before adopted. He would give their lordships a short description of them. The measures which would be brought forward were not new. They had, on former occasions, been brought under consideration. From what causes they had failed, was a question which it was not necessary to discuss. It was sufficient for him to show, that they were not new ideas, drawn out for the first time by present circumstances. The putting of some check, in one way or other, on the issue of small notes, was a plan suggested by his noble friend. So likewise was an arrangement with the Bank of England, having for its object to alter the situation in which that establishment stood with the public. He had no difficulty in stating what it was intended to propose on the present occasion. Indeed, he thought it better that no uncertainty should prevail on the subject; for it frequently did more mischief than a full knowledge of the general purport of the measures which government meant to adopt. He had therefore no difficulty in stating, that one of the measures which government intended to submit for the consideration of parliament, was a regulation, by which one and two pound Bank-notes would be gradually withdrawn from circulation, and a metallic currency substituted for them. Another measure which government would propose had become of essential importance to the interests of the country. He did not mean to join in the reflection which the noble baron had cast upon the Bank of England; but he was perfectly satisfied—and he had entertained the conviction for years—that the country had grown too large, that its concerns had become too extensive, to allow of the exclusive privilege of the Bank of England.

The privilege of the Bank might have been highly useful in the early period of our commercial transactions; but the country was now too large for any one such exclusive establishment. The Bank of England's privilege operated in a most extraordinary and, he thought, a most unfortunate manner for the country. Any small tradesman, a cheesemonger, a butcher, or a shoemaker, might open a country bank; but a set of persons with a fortune sufficient to carry on the concern with security were not permitted to do so. He was old enough to remember the time when there was scarcely such an institution as a country bank, except in great commercial towns, and when the transactions of the country were carried on in Bank of England notes, and money obtained from London. But now, when such a mode of conducting the transactions of the country was no longer practicable, it ought to be the policy of parliament to place all country banks on a solid foundation, and to amend a state of law which he would not say allowed of the establishment only of banks which were not solid, because he believed the greater proportion of the country banks were substantial, but which certainly prevented the establishment of those which, from the nature of their constitution, must be most solid. It was, however, necessary to deal with the existing charter of the Bank of England, which would not expire till 1833. But, if the Bank could be induced to give up so much of their exclusive privilege as related to country banks, and if they would accompany that surrender with a measure which would be desirable for their own sakes; namely, the establishment, in some parts of the country, of branches of their own institution—the effect on the general circulation of the country would, he thought, be most beneficial. Such was the general nature of the measure which government would feel it necessary to propose at the present moment. He had considered it better to make this general statement, than to leave the intentions of government involved in obscurity or doubt. He did not mean to say that there were no difficulties to be contended with. The whole question must be the subject of discussion hereafter. To enter upon that discussion at the present moment would be improper. With respect to the question put to him by the noble baron, on the subject of the Corn laws, he had no difficulty in repeating what he had stated last session; namely, that his opinion was, that sooner or later it would be highly desirable to revise the general system of the Corn laws. There were, however, a variety of circumstances to be taken into consideration. He had no difficulty in stating, that it was not his intention, nor that of any member of his majesty's government, to bring forward any proposition with regard to the general question during the present session. He saw no circumstances connected with the present situation of the country, which rendered it the imperative duty of government to bring that question under the immediate consideration of parliament. He had spoken particularly of the general question; because, a detached measure with respect to Canada corn, which was passed last year, and would expire in 1827, it might be necessary to re-consider in the course of the present or of the next session. Upon the point, whether it would be expedient to review that particular measure during the present session, he would reserve himself; but he wished it to be distinctly understood, that government did not consider it necessary to bring forward the general question during the present session. A noble lord had alluded to the absence of his Majesty. He was at a loss to imagine what could be the noble lord's object in introducing such a topic. He had, however, no objection to state, that his Majesty's absence was owing to indisposition alone.

The Earl of *Carnarvon* doubted whether the gradual withdrawal of the 1*l.* and 2*l.* Bank notes would have all the beneficial effect which the noble earl anticipated from the measure. He greatly feared that the prosperity of the country, during the last two or three years, had rested upon a fallacious foundation. He apprehended that the apparent prosperity had partly arisen from the measure which authorised the circulation of small notes. That measure had produced good in the first instance, and evil afterwards. He had never concurred with the opinion which many had entertained of the difficulties of the country having terminated with the resumption of cash payments. It was impossible to pay in gold a debt contracted in paper. He hoped that parliament would take the whole of the question into its consideration, and not confine its attention to particular branches. He supposed it was intended to place country banks generally on the same footing with

those in the northern part of the island. Previous to the last war, the greatest portion of the currency of those banks was paper. Under that currency Scotland had flourished, and had not experienced those convulsions which this part of the country had felt under the restrictive system. It was therefore highly desirable that parliament should consider the question in all its parts, and establish a permanent system instead of constantly changing its measures. The Speech from the throne held forth the prospect of years of continued peace. He hoped that those years would be occupied in establishing the internal condition of the country on a permanent foundation. If any alteration was to be made in the currency, it had better be effected at once, than gradually. A graduated system was proposed in 1819, and their lordships knew that it had been productive of no benefit. The temporizing measures adopted with respect to the silk-manufacture, had greatly aggravated, if not entirely caused, the distress under which that trade was at present suffering. The introduction of foreign silks was postponed for two years; and the consequence was, that the manufacturers entered into extensive speculations, and over-stocked the market during the period allowed for the continuance of their monopoly. If they had been allowed only a few months to dispose of their stock on hand, the existing distress would not have prevailed.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, that from the time he had first thought upon the subject, he had always been of opinion that a paper currency, convertible into gold on demand, was that which was best adapted for the transaction of the business of a country. A currency of that decription at present existed in this country. He challenged any of their lordships to state an instance, since the resumption of cash payments, in which gold had not been given in exchange for paper when demanded. In his opinion it was not to the currency that it was necessary to look for the origin of the existing embarrassments. In the course of the last year there had been a demand on the capital and labour of the country, to the extent of 17,000,000*l.* Let any man consider whether the country was capable of answering that demand. The distress which was caused at the commencement of the late war, by the raising of a loan of only four millions, was nearly as great as that which at present existed. Could the present state of the country, then, be matter of surprise, when a demand was made on its labour and capital to the amount of seventeen millions? The noble earl had read a statement of the increased issues of country bank-notes for the last year or two; but if he wished to account for the embarrassments of the country, he had better analyse the number and qualities of the Steam and Mining, and other joint-stock companies which had recently been formed, and the quantity of capital which had been sunk in these speculations. At all events, if it was intended to restrict the circulation of one and two pound notes, he hoped that such a restriction would not be extended to Scotland.

The Amendment was negatived, and the Address agreed to without a division.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, February 2.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.] The Speaker having reported the Speech of the Lords Commissioners, and read it to the House,

Mr. *John Stuart Wortley* (member for Bossiney) rose, for the purpose of moving an Address to his Majesty, in answer to the Speech which had just been read. In doing so, he was, he said, aware of the difficulty of the task which he had undertaken, from the circumstance of his being a young member, and this being the first time he had had the honour to address that assembly. It had been the duty of his predecessors, in the task which was now assigned him, to congratulate the country upon its flourishing condition. In the Speech which had been just read, he also found motive for congratulation; although the year which had passed over them had not been marked by some so pre-eminent advantages as former years had been. In adverting to the royal Speech, the first subject that arrested his attention was the formidable shock which the commercial credit had recently sustained. This was the topic that most strongly challenged the attention of the House; and they should come to the consideration of it boldly and manfully, with a view of removing it, or at least, checking its increase. And here due credit must be given to ministers for having introduced this important subject to the notice of parliament. They stated it with candour, and admitted it without

evasion or reserve. For his own part, he saw no reason why they should act otherwise; for, in his conscience, he believed that the distress was temporary, and that the worst had passed over. Similar commercial distress had prevailed in 1793 and 1798; and there were some features of resemblance between those periods and the present. There were then, as now, numerous failures: there were then, as now, difficulties in discounting bills, and a variety of commercial embarrassments. At the former of those periods, the country was on the eve of a tremendous war, through which no person could clearly see his way. Again, in 1798, when a still greater commercial calamity prevailed, the country was surrounded by accumulated difficulties, the natural consequence of its continuance. An alarm of invasion also prevailed, and the difficulties which this alarm excited, were increased by embarrassments occasioned by large loans to continental powers which were about that period entered into. The causes in which the distress then originated were very different from those out of which the recent difficulties had arisen. Those of the former period might in some degree be charged on the government, who had entered into the war; but now, those in which they originated, were such as government could not control. The present distress might be considered temporary and transient. The former could not be so regarded, as it arose out of a war, of which it was impossible to calculate either the period of its termination or the amount of its cost. Now, there was no war—no alarm from foreign enemies—no apprehension from domestic insurrection. The causes were altogether different. At the commencement of the last year, there was a redundancy of capital, which induced the employment of it in speculative loans, and in extravagant schemes of remote and uncertain profit. This was the great and leading cause of the recent commercial embarrassment. Another cause was found in the circumstance of several of the foreign exchanges turning against this country. To these causes was to be added another, and a proximate one; namely, the failure of several of the country banks. All these were temporary causes, and a corrective might be found for them, in the abandonment of those wild and extravagant speculations in which they originated, and in otherwise counteracting them. With respect to the other part of the subject, that which related to the currency, from whatever cause the present state of the currency arose, it required some alteration, and strongly called for the interposition of parliament. In those periods of commercial distress to which he had before alluded, parliament did interfere, and interfered with effect: and, what parliament had done before so much to the public advantage, it might again do. A principal part of the distress had been owing to the apprehension of a deficiency of gold to meet the demand for it. This apprehension arose from a belief that gold was exported out of the country to meet those demands occasioned by those foreign loans and speculations to which he had alluded; and, the consequence was, that the country was deluged with a morbid paper circulation. The manner in which some of the country bankers issued their notes loudly called for the attention of the House. It was, in his opinion, little else than a fraud to issue notes without having a security equal to the amount of the notes issued. It was not right that a business, on which the welfare of the country so greatly depended, should be undertaken by persons who had not the means of giving security to meet the demands for which they became responsible. The subject was one which was surrounded with great difficulties, and therefore demanded the nicest attention. Something had already been done with effect. What further ought to be done he would not undertake to say, but would leave it to his majesty's ministers to suggest what alterations, in the present state of our currency, it would be advisable to adopt. He could not refrain from expressing on this occasion, the great gratitude which the country owed to the Bank of England, for the manner in which they had come forward on the late crisis. By their conduct they had raised their already high reputation, and deserved to be raised in the confidence of the country. That he was correct in stating, that the present distress mainly originated in the spirit of extravagant speculation that lately raged, he would refer to a report of the committee of the House in 1811, which stated, among other causes of the distress that prevailed at that time, "that it was a result of the too great commerce which had been indulged in since the commencement of our intercourse with the new South American States."—In reviewing the causes in which the distress originated,

he should not omit to notice the effect of the repeal of the Combination laws. The combination among the workmen which had reached so alarming an extent, had now happily subsided. In Bradford, their conduct had, for weeks, assumed a formidable appearance; but he was happy to learn that a better spirit now prevailed amongst them, and that these differences, throughout the country, had nearly all terminated in an amicable reconciliation. But, because these excesses, consequent on the change of our commercial policy, and of the repeal of the Combination laws had taken place, did he mean to condemn that policy, or to desire that the Combination laws should be repealed? By no means. The removal of restraints on uneducated minds was calculated to lead to violence: but, as the principles on which these restraints were removed were sound and good, the evil would be only temporary, whilst the advantages would be permanent. The commercial regulations which had been formed with foreign nations were most creditable to this country, and likely to confer great and general blessings. The treaty with France was calculated to give effect to those principles of trade and navigation which parliament had previously sanctioned. That convention, as well as the treaty of amity, between this country and Colombia, was equally creditable and beneficial; not so much for the stipulations it contained, as for the enlarged principles of policy in which it was conceived and executed. In the amicable relations subsisting between this country and the other free provinces of South America, no blame can be attached to England for the part she had acted in promoting these arrangements. It was now fifteen years since the first effort was made in South America, to throw off the authority of Spain. During all that period, Spain had an opportunity of entering into an amicable reconciliation with her colonies. She could not, therefore, now censure us for having preceded her in a recognition, from which such important benefits were to flow. Another topic of congratulation was, the successful mediation of a treaty between the crowns of Portugal and Brazil. With regard to the war in the Burmese empire, however its protracted duration might have disappointed the expectations of those who had not the means of judging as to the probability of speedy success, there was every reason to hope that it was drawing to a close. It was highly gratifying to find, in respect to the state of the public revenue, that although the last quarter had fallen short, the result of the whole year was highly satisfactory. He would now refer to a subject which never failed to excite the liveliest feelings in the House. He alluded to the state of Ireland. From every report received from that country, it was evident that she was disengaging herself from the evils under which she had laboured. Industry was diffusing itself throughout her provinces; and he need not state, that industry was the never-failing precursor of tranquillity. Reviewing, therefore, the general state of the empire, he did not hesitate to call upon the House for an address to the throne. He did not ask it in the spirit of servility; he claimed it, on the contrary, in a spirit of pure loyalty, and with reference to the satisfactory state of the country. The hon. member then moved,

"That an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, to return to his Majesty the thanks of this House for his Majesty's most gracious Speech, delivered this day by the Lords Commissioners:

"To assure his Majesty, that while we participate with his Majesty in the regret with which his Majesty has seen the embarrassment which has occurred in the pecuniary transactions of the country since the close of the last session of parliament, we derive some consolation from the reflection that this embarrassment has not arisen from any political events, either at home or abroad; from any sudden pressure on the public resources; or from the apprehension of any interruption to the general tranquillity:

"That, aware that the direct interposition of parliament cannot reach all the causes of this evil, against the recurrence of some of which security can only be found in the experience of the sufferings which they have occasioned, we shall proceed without delay to turn our attention to that portion of the evil which may be susceptible, of correctives at least, if not of effectual remedies, and to consider of such measures as may tend to protect both private and public interests against the like sudden and violent fluctuations, by placing on a more firm foundation the currency and circulating credit of the country:

"To express to his Majesty the satisfaction with which we learn that his Majesty continues to receive from his allies,

and generally from all foreign princes and states, the strongest assurances of their friendly disposition towards his Majesty; and our just and grateful acknowledgment of his Majesty's continued endeavours to reconcile conflicting interests, and to recommend and cultivate peace both in the old world and in the new:

"That we recognize with the highest gratification the signal success of that wise and beneficent system of policy in the treaty concluded under his Majesty's mediation between the crowns of Portugal and Brazil, by which the relations of friendly intercourse, long interrupted, between two kindred nations, have been restored, and the independence of the Brazilian empire has been formally acknowledged:

"That we thank his Majesty for availing himself of every opportunity to give effect to the principles of trade and navigation, which have received the sanction of parliament, and to establish them, as far as possible, by engagements with foreign powers; and for having directed to be laid before us copies of a convention, framed upon these principles, which has recently been concluded between his Majesty and the king of France, and of a similar convention with the free Hanseatic cities of Lubeck, Bremen, and Hamburgh, as well as of the treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, concluded between his Majesty and the republic of Colombia; and to assure his Majesty of our readiness to take into immediate consideration any measure which may be required for giving effect to the stipulations of this latter treaty:

"To assure his Majesty that much as we should have been gratified if the successes of the late campaign had led to a cessation of hostilities in India, we concur with his Majesty in doing justice to the bravery displayed in that campaign by the forces of his Majesty and of the East India company, and to the skill and perseverance of their commanders, and in earnestly hoping that a continuance of the same exertions may lead, at no distant period, to an honourable and satisfactory pacification:

"To acknowledge his Majesty's goodness in having turned his attention to the measures recommended by committees of this and of the other House of parliament during the last session for improving the condition of Ireland, and to express to his Majesty the cordial satisfaction with which we learn from his Majesty that the industry of that part of the United Kingdom is in a course of gradual and general advancement, an advancement mainly to be attributed to that state of tranquillity which now happily prevails throughout all the provinces of Ireland:

"To thank his Majesty for having directed the estimates of the year to be prepared and laid before us:

"To express the pleasure with which we heard that those estimates have been framed with an anxious desire to avoid every expenditure beyond what the necessary demands of the public service may require, and that the produce of the revenue in the last year has fully justified the expectations entertained at the commencement of it:

"To assure his Majesty, that we humbly concur with his Majesty in deeply lamenting the injurious effects which the late pecuniary crisis must have entailed upon many branches of the commerce and manufactures of the United Kingdom; but that we partake also of the confidence which his Majesty entertains, that the temporary check which commerce and manufactures may at this moment experience will, under the favour of divine Providence, neither impair the great sources of our wealth, nor impede the growth of national prosperity."

Mr. *Green* said, that, situated as England was, owing her great general prosperity to commerce and manufactures, and dependent, especially in time of peace, upon those sources for the high station which she maintained among the nations of the world, it would ill become the government of the country, if, when any danger threatened those manufactures, or temporary evil led to a convulsion in them, it failed to bring the subject in the fullest as well as in the most speedy way, before the consideration of parliament. The subject was one as to the importance of which there could be no second opinion. It was a subject which parliament would investigate, not merely as regarded circumstances of present or local distress, but taking it in a large and comprehensive point of view; considering the several effects likely, in various quarters, to result from it; and particularly the consequences which it might produce upon that general mercantile credit and confidence which were so essential to the success of all commercial speculation. In speaking of the

duty which devolved upon parliament, to examine into the causes which might have led to the late commercial shocks, as also to take such measures as it should deem fit to prevent the recurrence of similar calamities, he felt that he could only hope to go again over the ground which had been so ably taken by the hon. mover; but, the subjects were of such paramount importance, that he should compromise his duty if he were wholly silent upon them in seconding the motion for the address. Looking first, then, at the subject of the late distresses, it was not unnatural for the recollection to go back to the events of the years 1793 and 1797; but, upon a slight examination, it would appear that the distress at those periods had taken place under circumstances widely different from those of the present day. The distress in the year 1793, it would be recollected, had arisen at the outset of a war; that of the present day, on the contrary, took place in a period of profound peace. We stood in an attitude of perfect peace; without the slightest apprehension of being involved in war; after a harvest, full and abundant; our commerce and our manufactures prosperous. But yet, with all this difference between the state of things at present, and the year 1793, there was one point of strong similarity. It would be remembered that both in the year 1792, as in the year now last past, the interest of money had been unusually low. In 1792 the manufactures of the country had been rapidly advancing; and the general prosperity was such as induced many individuals to trade beyond their capital. The country banks at that time had not the power of issuing small notes; but those which they were empowered to issue they had sent out to a vast and dangerous excess. The consequence was, that the country found itself glutted with paper. A slight apprehension produced immediate pressure upon those country bankers who were least able to sustain it; and the stoppage of these pulled down others who were solvent, but who were not prepared to meet so sudden a demand. The failure of one man, of necessity led to the failure of some other: there was a demand for cash far beyond the possible supply; and out of a mischief in many cases imaginary, real evil was created, until the most serious distress and difficulty was the result. Now, let the House observe how nearly this state of things in the year 1792 tallied with the state of things at the opening of the last session. Capital was so abundant, that the merest adventurer might go into the money-market; and let his scheme be the wildest that human fancy could suggest, he would find people to support him in it. Then was it a matter of astonishment that if the bubble had burst, a void was left behind? or that, at the present moment, instead of a mass of capital, floating through the country, we had a scarcity of it? With this part of the general question, there was connected one point which he could not forbear from noticing —he meant the conduct of the Bank of England during the late troubles. That body was entitled to the thanks of the country at large, for the prompt and liberal manner in which it had rendered all the assistance in its power. The sudden issue of their small notes had been a measure called for by the sudden withdrawal of the local small notes from circulation, owing to the failure of so many provincial establishments. The House would also feel, that although during the last year there had been a vast imaginary capital floating in the country, at the present time the real and actual capital available was lessened in consequence of many bankers still keeping large sums of ready money by them, to meet any sudden emergency. Whatever might be done, however, to prevent, as far as possible, the recurrence of such convulsions as the country had just suffered under, parliament would recollect that it was one of its first duties to leave the freedom of trade untouched, as far as was consistent with the general safety. To avoid a temporary and an occasional evil, we were not to give up a constant and a lasting good. From time to time, under the best government, popular tumults would arise; but means might be found to prevent anarchy and mischief, without striking at the root of constitutional freedom; and remedies might be found for occasional commercial evils, without weakening that great system upon which the wealth and power of the nation depended. With the immediate nature of such remedies he would not then busy himself: but the House would recollect that the same remedies were not now applicable which were resorted to in 1793. The state of the country was widely different at the two periods. We were not now in a state of war; and government had not, as in the year 1793, called upon the Bank for a large portion of the gold

in its possession—a measure which had led, and necessarily, to the Bank restriction. At present, whatever was the extent of the difficulty, no portion of it could be attributed to the conduct of government, or to its arrangements. This being a period of peace, too, in another sense it would not be inconsistent with the interests of the country to take the course which had been taken formerly. We had now leisure and opportunity to go into the system thoroughly; and it was no less the bounden duty than the policy of the House to do so. For himself, he thought it would be a great boon on the part of the Bank, if that body permitted the formation of joint-stock banking companies. The advantages likely to accrue from such a system, were too obvious to be dwelt upon. The vast property which would then be embarked in every banking establishment would be a sufficient security against the danger of over-issues. The business would be carried on by persons conversant with the true principles of the banking trade; and not, as now, by individuals often wholly ignorant of those principles, and who left the management of their establishment to needy adventurers, or unprincipled speculators. Scotland already afforded us an example of the safety and convenience of this system. Scotland had a large paper currency; and felt neither difficulty nor apprehension. Although no man could feel more anxious than he did, to afford every possible facility to trade, yet it did seem to him that some restriction might be beneficially devised to keep within due limits the issues of the banks. As regarded the issue of local notes, there could be no doubt that some immediate measure was imperatively called for, parliament would grossly neglect its duty, if steps were not taken to relieve the country from apprehension of the recurrence of the evils which it had lately been suffering; if it permitted that which the poor man had acquired by his labour to be placed in jeopardy; or if it upheld a system under which the same man, without one fault or improvidence of his own, might one day be rich, and the next want the means of existence. It was needless, however, to detain the House with comments upon the performance of a duty, the necessity of which must be obvious; and he should therefore turn from the consideration of difficulties which could not be contemplated without regret, to a subject which afforded matter for unmixed congratulation. If there had been some distress felt during the last year in England, in Ireland there was every token of material improvement. The labours of parliament, during the last session, had been great upon this subject. The House had inquired not merely into general questions, but had gone assiduously into all the details and intricacies of her domestic economy. The situation of Ireland was now meliorating. The House was no longer called upon to pass Insurrection acts, or to pursue any coercive measures. Instead of steps to enforce the payment of tithes, a system was adopted of taking compositions; by which the settlement was rendered less irksome to the people. It was the desire of government to enter fairly and dispassionately into every subject immediately connected with the state of Ireland; and if the measures pursued had not produced all the good that had been expected, it was the wish of ministers to enter into a full consideration of what would be most conducive to the best interests of Ireland. He felt the greatest satisfaction in witnessing the influx of manufactures into Ireland. Capital now began to overflow into that country—a desideratum from which so much benefit must infallibly arise to that country. We should find, in a short period, the immense effects of this influx of capital upon the Irish landholders. They would feel it to be their interest and pleasure, to establish themselves on their own estates; and Ireland, like England, would soon possess all the advantages of a resident gentry. With this prospect of a numerous population coming into active employ, and with foreign ports open to exchange the produce of their industry, it was impossible not to foresee a rapid improvement in the condition of that country. Neither could he suppress the expression of his satisfaction at the state in which this country stood with regard to the republics of South America. The conduct of Great Britain upon this point had been liberal and manly. The government had openly declared, that its recognition of the American states did not rest upon matters of opinion, but upon a simple question of fact. We had declared openly, that when the governments of those countries had fully established their independence, then, and not till then, would we acknowledge them as independent governments; and when that event did take place, we accordingly re-

cognised them. We were not to be intimidated by any foreign powers, into the withholding or delaying our recognition; but, at the same time, we would not rush madly into a war, when we could obtain our object more effectually without it. We might undoubtedly feel a satisfaction at Liberty extending her blessings over those vast and hitherto ill-governed regions; but, at the same time, it did not behove us to be led away by individual feelings; it was necessary to act upon sound and general principles of justice and international law, as well as upon views of general policy. The results had justified the views which the government had taken upon the subject. We had secured the friendship of those states, by declaring, that, although we should withhold our recognition of them until their independence should be unequivocal, we would resist the attempts of any other government that should endeavour to assist Spain in her efforts to re-establish her power over her colonies. The arguments which had been so often brought forward, that because Spain had interfered in the early part of our own war with our American colonies, we should therefore be justified in assisting her colonies against her, were arguments quite untenable. It was a principle of retaliation upon which no individual would guide himself in his private transactions, and upon which no Englishman who felt for the national character would wish to see his country guide her public conduct. He had now only to refer to the subject of Finance. The late shock which had been given to the commercial transactions of the country, had had their effect upon the revenue; but it was highly satisfactory to reflect, that, notwithstanding this unexpected event, the revenue for the year was, upon the whole, greater than what the chancellor of the Exchequer had anticipated. He trusted that the difficulties under which the country was at present labouring would be soon removed; and that our commerce would speedily receive all those benefits which could not fail to arise from the principles of free trade which government had adopted. Although the commerce of the country had undoubtedly flourished under the system of restrictions, he was convinced that but for them it would have advanced more rapidly and with less precarious results. He had little doubt but that, in the course of a short period, the other governments of Europe would see the advantages arising from the principles of free trade; and the evils of persevering in the contrary system. Seeing that our finances were likely to return to their flourishing condition; that our trade was likely to increase; that Ireland was prosperous; that South America was forming so great a mart for our united industry, and reflecting also upon the success and glory of our arms, in the only country in which they are engaged; under these circumstances could it be said that our prosperity had gone by, or that our grandeur was upon the decline? A passing gale may have stopped the tide of our prosperity; but as soon as the storm shall have gone over, Great Britain would again hold that pre-eminent station which she had hitherto held amongst nations; and the page of future history would record the present panic as the passing events of the day, which had produced no lasting mischief.

Mr. *Brougham* said, it was a subject of great regret, that ministers had departed from the old and established practice of delivering a copy of the king's Speech, for the information of members, a few days before they were called on to discuss it and to vote upon its contents. This want of courtesy on their part was attended with considerable inconvenience. Although there were not many definite propositions laid down in the Speech just delivered from the Throne, there were a variety of important matters touched upon in it, and the House were called upon to discuss and vote upon them, without half an hour's previous notice, or any means of making up their minds upon the subject. Members were thus called upon to accede to the address, which was foisted upon them by a side wind, and no option was afforded them but of either moving an adjournment, or of blindly voting for that into which they had no opportunity of inquiring. Although it was not his intention to move an adjournment, or even to oppose the present address, he thought it necessary to protest against its being inferred that he therefore acceded to its contents; on the contrary, he reserved to himself the future occasions that might arise for discussing the topics which it embraced, as fully as if he had not voted for it that evening. He could not help feeling, that the address would go to the public, as if there were a general concurrence of the House in the statements which it contained; whereas no such inference ought to be drawn from the circumstance

of its passing without meeting with an expressed and formal opposition. The country would feel not a little surprised, when they found that the distress, which had been so severely and extensively felt, was treated in so slight a manner, and mentioned in terms totally inadequate to the extent and severity of the evil. It was talked of as if it were something of a very temporary nature, and confined to partial and almost immaterial transactions; whereas it was well known to be general and severe, to have spread the greatest possible embarrassments throughout the most important branches of our industry, and to have entailed the greatest sufferings upon numerous classes of the people. Yet, notwithstanding the extent and variety of this distress—for that it did exist to a great extent it was impossible to deny—there was one topic in his Majesty's Speech of a most consoling nature, as it clearly proved, if any argument to prove such a fact were necessary, that they did not arise out of those sound and wise and liberal principles of commercial policy, which had recently been proposed by his Majesty's government, and which, he was happy to say, had received the sanction of parliament. If the distresses which at present prevailed were confined to one single branch of our trade; if, for instance, it were found to exist in our silk trade alone, it might afford some little argument though certainly not one upon which much stress could be laid, in favour of those who opposed themselves to the alterations recently made in that trade. But when it was found that our woollen, our cotton, our linen trade, and various other branches of our manufactures, were labouring under a similar depression, it was as vain to attempt the proof of the assertion on the one hand, that this distress was wholly attributable to our late commercial policy, as it was needless to contradict it on the other. He was aware that people speaking of this experiment, said, that, like others, it had been tried, and had failed. That assertion, however true of other experiments, did not hold good with respect to this. True it was, that the experiment had been introduced; but it had not been tried. Time for its trial had not yet been afforded, and therefore it could not be said to have failed. If they reflected a little, they would find, that if any portion of the distress in the silk trade was attributable to the recent alterations, it was to be attributed to a consequence of those alterations with which the parties would be least likely to complain—he alluded to the fact, that upon the diminution of the duties, large sums were returned upon the stock on hand; a circumstance which, of itself, gave rise to considerable overtrading. When men were suffering under great and pressing distress, it was a painful, a delicate, and a thankless undertaking, to tell them that a part of their distresses was attributable to themselves. But he felt himself called upon, in the discharge of his duty, to declare that much of the distress under which the silk trade, as well as the other branches of our manufactures, at present laboured, was to be attributed to over-trading. He would not go back to what took place in 1793, or in 1797, in support of his argument, but would confine himself to a period more recent and more analogous to present times and existing circumstances. When, for instance, we had a new market opened to us in South America, speculation and enterprise became so great, that over trading to a great extent was the natural consequence. Again, when the peace of 1814 opened the trade of the continent to us, over-trading was carried to such an extent, that several of our merchants found it a profitable traffic to send to Holland, and there re-purchase and re-import our own manufactures. The markets of South America were equally glutted with our iron, crockery, and various other articles. This was the usual consequence of having a new market opened to us, and no persons could be blamed for the excess but the over-traders themselves. As well might it be argued, that we ought not to open a new market, or discover a new colony with which to trade, as that we were not to adopt sound, and wise, and enlightened principles of commerce, because the one as well as the other might give rise to over-trading on the part of certain individuals. He trusted, that upon this subject, there would take place in that House no such difference of opinion as would lead to any unjust conclusions, or delusive expectations, out of doors. Upon this point as well as upon that which followed it, he most fully concurred with the hon. mover and seconder of the address. In adverting to the late commercial regulations, he might perhaps feel that it would have been better, had some little alteration been made in the mode of carrying certain measures into effect; but

those measures having received the sanction of parliament, he felt that it would be exceedingly unfair now to turn round, and assert that they might have been carried into execution with more effect.—There were only two points more alluded to in the Speech from the Throne, upon which he felt it necessary to say a few words. And first, with respect to our currency. Now, he would put it to any thinking man, to recollect what must have been his opinions, when he last year heard of a great event which took place on the continent, and which was likely to affect, in a material degree, the future peace of Europe: he would ask him, whether the first great objects of his attention, in providing for the security of England, would not naturally be—the national debt, the currency, and the state of Ireland. The debt was, perhaps, not within their reach; but the currency was within their control; Ireland was within their control; and therefore he must feel that the latter must sooner or later come under the consideration of parliament. When he heard it stated, that Ireland had, for the last year and a-half, been not only tranquil, but progressively advancing in prosperity, he could not help expressing his sincere satisfaction at it; yet, on inquiry, he found that the tranquillity of Ireland was to be attributed to the expectations entertained by the people, that something would be done for them by parliament. He believed, in his heart, that the tranquillity of Ireland was mainly preserved by the steady attention with which they looked forward to the exertions of the House of Commons in their favour. To that House did they ardently and confidently look for relief; and, sincerely did he hope that, at a convenient time, they would not be allowed to look and hope in vain. If the people of Ireland were again (after a convenient time) allowed to look and hope in vain, in vain might England look to Ireland for unanimity and exertion, when both should be most required from her. He firmly believed that the peace of Ireland had been in a great degree preserved by the Catholic Association. As long as the Roman Catholics of Ireland remained firm and united amongst themselves—as long as they continued to yield ready obedience to the laws, however opposed to the means by which those laws had been enacted—so long had they a right to entertain a just and reasonable expectation, that they would obtain, from the justice of the legislature, an equal participation in those rights and privileges, from the enjoyment of which they had been for such a length of time debarred.—He had heard, with much pleasure, that part of his Majesty's Speech which had reference to our intercourse with South America. It was matter of pride and pleasure to reflect upon the glory achieved by the brave inhabitants of those republics—a set of men who, unaided, unsupported, had succeeded in establishing their independence and freeing themselves, at once and for ever, from the detestable yoke which had so long and so ignominiously galled them. Those states were now at peace; their independence was recognized, and we were on friendly terms with them. That those friendly relations might remain unbroken, and that we should soon have united to us, by treaties similar to that with Colombia, all the other great republics in that part of the new world, who had achieved their liberties, was his most ardent wish, as their independence must afford matter of pure and sincere delight to every friend of freedom.—There was another matter to which he wished to advert. He meant the treaty between Portugal and Brazil; in which the independence of the latter had been formally acknowledged by the former nation. He hoped that that treaty would not be ratified in its present form; containing, as it did, an article of foreign policy against which he must ever protest: he alluded to a clause by which each nation pledged itself to give up to the other—whom? All persons guilty of murder, forgery, and piracy? No; but all persons not found guilty, but accused of high treason, who should take refuge in the territory of the other. And who was to be the judge of the act which was to be designated high treason? Why, the accuser:—so that there was no escape. If either government wished to get hold of an obnoxious person, it was only to accuse him of high treason, and his business was done. Now, this undertaking would not only compel us to retain upon our Statue-book the alien law, which of all the laws which appeared upon it was one of the most dangerous and offensive; but it might also bind us to execute it against an individual who should be accused of the slightest political offence, or even only be politically obnoxious. For it would not lie with us to decide what did or did not constitute trea-

son; and we might be made the instruments of inflicting punishment for that offence, although the charge should be as capricious, or as morally groundless, as some of those set up by our own Harry the eighth.—Much had been said upon the proceedings of the Bank of England during the late panic of the country. Without wishing to throw blame upon the conduct of that body, he could not help expressing his conviction, that an end must come to that system which exerted so powerful an influence at present, not only on the money market, but on the whole trade of the country. Some change ought to be effected, by which the interests of the whole empire, together with the fortunes of every family in it, should be drawn from the absolute control and direction of four and twenty men: be they bankers, or be they merchants, whether they were to be looked up to as a political corporation, or a powerful commercial company, it was too much to trust the whole property of the country to the absolute will or caprice of a few men, left in the exercise of a power which was constantly changing all the relations of that property—sometimes increasing their issues and raising its value, then as suddenly contracting them and leaving the commercial transactions in a state of corresponding embarrassment—now restricting their discounts, and now enlarging them—again restricting their issues, and lowering the rate of interest; and again suddenly enlarging their issues, and raising the rate of interest. Just such as they had lately witnessed were the fearful consequences of that system upon all the property of the country—such were the confusion and disorder which must continually prevail in all its concerns so long as the influence of that system was allowed to prevail. He meant not to say, that he distrusted the present Bank directors; but he distrusted, and should ever distrust, the wisdom of any set of men placed in their situation, and who, unless they possessed the gift of prophesy, could not be safely intrusted with powers such as those at present vested in the Bank of England, without check or control. Let the monopoly of the Bank of England be restricted, and let other companies have an opportunity of raising themselves up in opposition to them: then, and not till then, would the money market and the commercial transactions of the country be placed upon a steady and secure footing. He could gather from the King's Speech, that his Majesty's ministers intended to introduce some measure calculated to remedy the evils of the existing system; and therefore he should, for the present, abstain from entering more fully into the subject. He had only to add, that in not offering any opposition to the address, he was only actuated by the courtesy evinced by gentlemen around him, on that as well as on other occasions; reserving to himself the right of discussing every subject touched upon in it, when the proper occasions for doing so should present themselves.

Mr. *Robertson* said, that the distress of the country, great as it was at present, was only in its commencement, unless vigorous measures were applied to its relief. It would be recollected that during the last session he had implored the House and the ministry to step forth and secure the country from the open and barefaced spoliation which it was suffering by the machinations of joint-stock companies, from one end to the other. He clearly predicted what had proved to be the actual consequences of those schemes. And if he had thus seen beforehand the multitude of evils which had since been realized, he thought he had given the House sufficient warrant for the correctness of his opinions to entitle him to some portion of their attention. He considered the present embarrassments as the unavoidable consequences of that policy which had directed the public counsels, and which was now of ten years' duration. Should the government persevere in it, the existing calamities would be more than a gradual approach to the crisis. The House was bound to step in, and rescue the manufacturing and landed interests from that ruin which awaited them. He spoke upon the deepest reflection and consideration; and as far as facts were concerned, he was guided by statements which had been laid upon their table. If those statements were valid, that which he had to offer must make a serious impression on the House. The present difficulties might pass away; but greater remained behind, unless an end were brought to that speculative and gambling system of commerce which had produced it. Before he went into the subject, he would read to the House a passage out of an excellent pamphlet written fifteen years ago by the present right hon. president

of the Board of Trade. The subject of the passage was the balance of commerce, and he expected to be able to prove from it, that, without an essential alteration in our commercial policy, the greatest calamities would ensue. From this pamphlet he drew the following proposition—that the excess of the exports over the imports of a country is not a necessary inference of the prosperity of that country, or that the balance of trade was in its favour. It was only an indication that such a portion of the wealth of the country might be spared; it amounted, in the first instance, to no more than a proof of the capacity of the country to endure that expenditure and absence of surplus capital. It did not follow, according to the author, that that exported wealth or expenditure might not be beneficial to the country. Now, he (Mr. R.) was prepared to prove, that it was absolutely pernicious; that in the case of this country it was the direct cause of all the distress which prevailed. He took the excess of the exports over the imports, since the peace, at 189,000,000*l.*, for which no return had been made to this country to compensate the loss thus endured. And yet this was but a gradual advance to what must be expected from a perseverance in the same system. At the close of the war, and in the first year of the peace, the excess of exports above imports was only 13,000,000*l.*: last year it was 24,000,000*l.* Could any country live and thrive under this drawing away and transfer of its resources? They ought to think seriously of the means to prevent the destructive consequences of such a policy. When Mr. Pitt governed the country, this system had not begun its operations. The state of things was something like this:—From the peace with America to the French war, the excess of exports was about 600,000*l.* a-year. This expenditure was readily accounted for by the pay of ambassadors, and other functionaries, together with the expense of establishments abroad: so that it would be readily shown that not a single pound sterling left the country, for which another pound, or a proper equivalent, did not come in. From 1797 to 1808, the excess in the same way of expenditure amounted altogether to about five millions and a half. In the continuation of the war, this expenditure continued to increase, but in a proportion which might be accounted for by the expense of extensive fleets, and the capture and occupation of garrisons abroad. The expenses of our armies in the Spanish war alone would account for more than ten millions of the excess. At the peace, and ever since, the system had changed to an excess of this expenditure, which was continually increasing, without bringing back to the country any adequate returns—until it had reached the enormous sum of 189,000,000*l.* Let the House now allow him to show how this excess of 25,000,000*l.* of foreign expenditure worked among the various classes and interests of the country, and how it brought detriment upon the lowest as well as the highest. There being clearly that surplus of capital, its natural employment would be the application of it to the wages of labour among the increasing population of the country. For if the capital left the country in larger proportions than before, and the population continued to increase, the supply of labour must soon far exceed the employment given by the capital remaining; the labourers must be depressed, and the country impoverished. On this account, he could not but deplore that pernicious and pestilent doctrine which had obtained, that capital from England spent on the continent, or capital from Ireland spent on the continent or in England, was equally useful as the same capital spent in Ireland or in England. True it was, that such excess of expenditure abroad might have the appearance of prosperity; but it was only a speculative prosperity, big with national impoverishment. The House might ask how the surplus wealth was to be kept in the country? The question was not difficult to answer. Give such capital protection, and then it will stay at home and create a real prosperity, by bettering the wages of labour, and increasing the productive powers of the national industry. An absolutely free trade would let in foreign commodities. What would be the effect? The home manufactures must be pressed down by the competition; and capital, instead of being employed in compensating our own labourers, would be drawn in greater and greater quantities abroad, to bring in those supplies of foreign industry. He considered the doctrine of absolute free trade, as applied to this country, as the most vicious principle which had ever been adopted by thinking men. He begged pardon of the House for thus addressing them; but his feelings upon the subject were strong, and he could not repress them; so grievous were the results which

he anticipated from the adoption of that principle. The argument urged by the government in support of that system was, the usefulness of competition in restraining monopoly. Nothing could be so absurd. Competition with other countries was utterly impossible: circumstances were not the same; and unless circumstances were exactly equal, what competition could there be? There could be no competition, therefore, but that fair and proper competition which was sure to prevail beneficially for all among the subjects of the same country, striving with each other for superiority under the very same circumstances. No possible combination could there take place among them to the disadvantage of the country at large. Now, it was utterly impossible not to foresee the circumstances which might throw the advantage of foreign competition into the hands of France; and, once lost, it could never be recovered.—The hon. gentleman then called the attention of the House to a transaction which was utterly at variance with the principles of free trade, so loudly promulgated, though many members of that House, and some of the members of government were implicated. He must be excused for expressing his sense of it plainly. It appeared to him to be one of the vilest jobs which had been heard of among all the schemes with which the country had overflowed. He was sorry to use such expressions. No man thought better of the members of his majesty's government—no man gave his support to their measures generally with more cordial good-will—than he did. When the mad projects of the money-market and the commercial world were going forward in their destructive career, how often had he called upon the House to interpose! How often had he implored ministers to stand forward, and rescue the country from those pernicious delusions! Had the House done their duty, they would have broken up those complicated schemes which were brought out by companies upon companies. Now let the House remark the strange inconsistency of some of the advocates of free trade. Since they had last met, a charter had been granted by the Crown, similar to that upon which the monopoly of the East India company was originally founded; by which charter the new company had been authorized to vest a million of money in an exclusive scheme for the growth of silk in Great Britain and Ireland. The capital embarked was a million. The first capital of the East India company was no more than 72,000*l.* At a subsequent period the company obtained leave to invest 700,000*l.*, upon which it was afterwards found necessary to raise no more than 50 per cent.; so that 350,000*l.* was all that was paid in. Here was a million of money to be applied—a sum more than sufficient for three times the trade which this country would ever have to carry on in the growth and throwing of silk. The natural effect must be, that the company would ruin all minor competitors, and then raise their prices, to the inevitable injury, perhaps the destruction, of our silk manufactures. It grieved him to be obliged to give out the names of peers and hon. gentlemen who were implicated; but he could not refrain from doing his duty. The president was the marquis of Lansdown; vice-president, the earl of Liverpool. What would Mr. Pitt say, did he but know that his great disciple was to be found in such a list? [laughter.] Among the directors were, the right hon. W. Huskisson, Henry Brougham, Wilmot Horton, and Pascoe Grenfell. How different were the sentiments of the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade, as they appeared in his pamphlet, when commenting upon a similar project adopted by the French government, to force the cultivation of cotton. "Such," said he, "is the detestable policy which sways some of the powers of Europe, that we are boastingly told of whole districts of otherwise fertile territory being forcibly destined to a particular cultivation, and of the French government raising, at a ruinous expense, a little bad cotton." How soon the right hon. gentleman forgot his own principle in favour of a similar cultivation of a little bad silk!—while the produce of India was secured to the country on terms which made competion utterly impossible. Such was the inconsistency of the advocates of free trade, and of the government which had adopted their principles! Here was the most direct encouragement given to that disastrous scheming and speculation which had nearly convulsed the country. He disapproved of that part of the Speech which stated the pecuniary difficulties of the country to be without any remedy. The remedy was within the reach of the House. The remedy was, to keep the capital at home, encourage the productive industry, raise the demand for labour, and increase

the internal trade of the country. The foreign trade was a thing utterly insignificant in amount and importance when compared with this. He had no interested motive in the view of the question which he had taken. Every word he had uttered was opposed to his own particular interests as a foreign merchant. He spoke according to his sincere conviction. The chief calamity of the country was, that the government dwelt so much on our foreign commerce. They seemed to see nothing else, and to be blind to all other relations. The interests of the foreign merchant might be in opposition to the others. It was his interest that the country should not grow its own corn, but that it should be imported from places of cheaper growth. He was sure to be benefited by free trade. But, when the landed and manufacturing interests were depressed by that freedom of trade, it must be injurious to the country at large. He could not bring himself to concur in the opinion, that the remedy for the existing evils were not within the reach of that House.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* confessed that he did not clearly comprehend the drift of the arguments of the hon. member for Grampound; and felt utterly at a loss how to reply to them. The speech of his hon. friend appeared to contain some propositions of rather a startling nature; for if he understood him rightly, the effect of his argument tended directly not only to that consummation, which his hon. friend certainly desired, the extinction of our foreign commerce; but also to the extinction of all the advantages of our home industry. So, at least, did it appear to him. His argument was, that the greater part of the distresses of the country was to be attributed to excessive exports; and then again his greatest dread seemed to be from the operation of the principles of free trade, by excessive importations. How to reconcile such seeming contardictions, he must leave to the ingenious and speculative mind of his hon. friend. As to the crimes alleged against the government, at first he felt perfectly astounded—he could not conceive what he himself, or his right hon. friends had been about, to deserve the denunciation—he quite trembled at the terrible consequences which were to follow. But lo, and behold! some distinguished members of his majesty's government had lent their names to a speculation, the most innocent that had ever been set on foot. He himself was not a member of the association; but, what harm could there be in it? It appeared to him, on the contrary, that the growth of silk in this country was a most desirable object, if it could be accomplished; and in no degree similar to the monopoly of the East India company. His right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade, had suffered his name to be inserted in the list of directors, not for purposes of profit, but as an honorary title; and then the hon. member for Grampound, taunting his right hon. friend with this alleged inconsistency with the principles of free trade which he had so successfully advocated, referred to some passages in a very able pamphlet written during the bullion controversy, and which pointed out the absurdity of the French government in endeavouring to force the cultivation of cotton, some indifferent coffee, and manufacturing beet root into sugar. But this silk company did not propose to force the growth of silk. There was not a sentence in their charter to compel the honourable gentleman to grow a single mulberry on his estate. In what respect did an association for the voluntary cultivation of silk resemble a restrictive monopoly, or a compulsory appropriation of good corn lands to the production of cotton, coffee, and beet root? But, Buonaparte was absurd enough to pass a law, compelling his subjects to resort to miserable, futile, and ill-contrived attempts to produce the articles, which his own measures prevented him from obtaining in the regular and more natural way. Thus far in reply to the hon. gentleman's speech. And now, perhaps, the House would allow him to take that opportunity of explaining, in a general way, the views of his Majesty's government respecting the more important parts of the Speech from the throne. And here he would say, that the hon. and learned member for Winchelsea might have forborne from making one or two of his comments (and he was persuaded he would have done so), had he been sufficiently aware of the full contents of his Majesty's Speech. Undoubtedly the matters on which the hon. and learned gentleman had touched, were so important, as to be calculated to excite the strongest feelings of the country; and he owed his thanks to the hon. and learned gentleman for the moderate and candid tone in which he had explained his opinions upon many of these points. He was not, however,

justified in imputing to ministers the charge of treating too lightly the heavy distresses which so unfortunately prevailed. This imputation might have been spared; for he could solemnly assure the House, that nothing was further from the feelings or intentions of the executive government, than to treat with any thing bordering upon levity, those distresses which the country had endured, was still enduring, and might continue, to a certain extent, to be afflicted with, notwithstanding the utmost extent of human aid and sympathy. He entreated parliament to believe, that nothing was further from the meaning of his majesty's advisers, when they suggested the insertion of that paragraph in the King's Speech, than to treat the matter lightly. Indeed, he knew not what materials men could be made of, who could have so treated the sufferings of any large portion of their fellow-countrymen. He should have thought that the best proof of a contrary sentiment pervading the breasts of ministers, and that they did not behold with indifference the sufferings of large classes of the community, was to be found in the striking fact of their placing that topic in the very head and front of the royal Speech; thereby showing the country how strongly the king and his government felt the necessity of calling the immediate attention of parliament to the consideration of so painful a subject, if not to avert or mitigate its present evils, at least to prevent, so far as human wisdom could prevent, the recurrence of such disasters. When he talked, however, of such a precaution, it was in vain for any man who had observed the progress of the late events to deny, that, looking at the cause of the late shock in the pecuniary transactions of the people, there were no legislative precautions that could have averted the mischief. It was quite impossible to expect this virtue from public enactments, with the view of effectually controlling or directing the speculations of individuals in so great a commercial country as this, where such temptations were held out for enterprise—where so much skill and industry were displayed in the conduct of mercantile affairs. It was quite impossible to apply laws to govern the speculations of individuals in such a country as this, without doing far more mischief than good, by an attempt so inconsistent with the habits of Englishmen. There was, however, no ground for despondency, notwithstanding the present condition of the country. If they referred to the distresses which prevailed in 1816 and 1817, they would see how soon the country arose out of them in the following year. The extreme pressure in the one year was followed in the other by a rapid re-action of a contrary kind; and this was effected without any legislative measure, or violence of any kind, but from the very nature of the pressure itself; because they always found, that when circumstances for a while disabled any considerable portion of the people from indulging in their accustomed enjoyments, they eagerly seized the earliest opportunity their renewed means afforded, of an increased consumption of that of which they had been for a time deprived. They rushed, therefore, with a greater avidity to obtain what they desired to possess the moment it was brought within their grasp. It was, he thought, quite clear to any reflecting person, that the great proportion of all the public difficulties complained of, had arisen from causes out of the reach of human control; and he was perfectly satisfied, that the man who would legislate on the assumption, that all engaged in the foreign or domestic commerce, or the agriculture of this country, were necessarily persons of a prudent character, who would act upon sound views, and turn aside from visionary speculations, would find himself grievously disappointed when he beheld the effect of his system of legislative interference in concerns of private management. When he said this, he begged it at the same time to be understood, that undoubtedly there were cases in which it was competent for parliament to interpose, and in which it was decidedly useful to call for that interposition. And this distinction was particularly necessary to be laid down, in a country where its affairs were carried on with reference to a sound basis, and where it was impossible to avoid having a currency exposed to excess at one time, and depreciation at another. This was the case here, where the currency was so far of a mixed nature, as that the part of it consisting of paper greatly exceeded the amount in metallic coin. Under such circumstances, it was quite clear that the tendency of the paper portion of the circulating medium was to increase itself, and to effect this without reference to consequences; and singularly enough, the operation went on too, from causes which did not necessarily require that increase. This was precisely what

had happened in this country, and partly as connected with the circulation of the country banks, the increase of which within the last three or four years had been of a most extraordinary description. Of the actual state of the circulation of the country banks, it was difficult to form an accurate estimate; and this difficulty was in itself a very great evil, because it left both the Bank of England and the government in comparative obscurity upon a matter which it was essential for them to know, and deprived them of the advantage of having recourse to a known fact, which would enable them to determine the criteria how far the circulation was in excess. Although, however, they could not determine the precise amount of the country banks' circulation, they had the means of approximating to something like an estimate, by a reference to the amount of stamps issued within a given time to these bankers. It was usually considered that the average circulation of country bank paper lasted about three years—it might be more or less in particular cases, but the three years' average was mostly relied upon; and, therefore, if he multiplied each year's issue of stamps by three, he arrived at a probable test for the purpose of his argument. Judging in this manner, he found that, in the year 1820, the issue of country bank notes had been 3,493,901*l*. In 1821, it was 4,438,548*l*. And in the year 1825, it had got up to no less a sum than 8,755,000*l*. During this progressive operation of the country banks, there was no excess of circulation apprehended, and the affairs of the country were generally in a rapidly increasing state of prosperity. But, nevertheless, the inevitable result of this operation must be, to produce a rise in prices, which naturally extended a spirit of speculation, where men struggled who should get most money for articles in demand.—But this was not all the evil which this system of circulation encompassed. A great deal of difficulty arose out of the present constitution of their banking system, and especially from that part of it which was composed of one pound notes, notes which, from the smallness of their amount, necessarily circulated among the poorer classes of society, upon whom they entailed the heaviest affliction when the time of revulsion and stoppage arrived. When one of these banks break, thousands upon thousands of poor people lose their all, and are visited with the most heart-rending affliction. A great deal was said of the spirit of trade excited by, and the consequent benefits resulting from the circulation supplied by these banks, but he would unhesitatingly ask, what advantage had been conferred on agriculture, on commerce, on the community at large, which could be put in competition with the ruin of its re-action at a moment of panic, and the wide-spreading evils which its sudden depreciation inflicted? What real or apparent benefit could compensate for the poverty and misery to which it consigned so large a portion of the working classes of the community, who possessed nothing for their labour or their sustenance, but the worthless piece of paper bearing the impress of the local bank? Who, with a heart to feel, could refrain from saying, that these evils did not far, very far, outweigh all the exaggerated advantages of the circulation of this mass of country paper?—Upon the fullest consideration which he had been able to give this part of the matter embraced in his Majesty's Speech, he had come to the conclusion, that it was indispensably necessary to apply an immediate remedy to that great source of public mischief. Of course, it would not be expected of him, at that moment, to go into the details of the measure by which he intended to accomplish this beneficial purpose. Undoubtedly, caution was necessary in the progress of the work. It was not always the most prudent course to rush headlong to an opposite extreme from that in which they had previously acted; yet he thought something must be done decisively and effectually, to prevent the recurrence of the evils so universally complained of. And when he reflected upon this state of things, it was to him a source of regret that in the arrangements respecting the currency provided by parliament in the year 1822, the original intention of causing the indulgence granted to the country bankers to issue small notes to cease in the year 1825, had been abandoned. He greatly regretted that any circumstances should, at the time he referred to, have induced government to abandon their first intention; but what had passed since had abundantly confirmed him in the opinion that they must now have recourse to a firm and decided measure, for the purpose of placing the currency of the country upon a durable basis. This, however, would not have the effect of preventing a recurrence of

the evil, without another measure, which was equally important. He alluded to what had been appropriately termed the exclusive privileges of the Bank of England, as their charter now stood. It was impossible for any man who considered what was the extent of the public transactions of this great kingdom, and the measures inevitably necessary for carrying on the business of the nation and the government, not to see, that one single chartered banking company, however well constituted, was inadequate to execute all the functions of the state. The town business—that immediately on the spot—they could conduct, undoubtedly, in the present manner; but not so throughout the country, where the government had necessarily pecuniary affairs to transact, and where, from the necessity of the case, country banks had sprung up and taken a part of that business. That the Bank of England was at the outset perfectly sufficient for all purposes, he readily admitted; but the immense growth of the wants of the country for banking aid had become so extended, that the case was altered, and a change to meet this varied aspect must be brought about. Country banks had become necessary, in consequence of the exclusive privileges of the Bank of England and the outgrowing claims of the public. And, from these very circumstances, the country banks had been so constituted, that they were deprived of much of the solidity of what ought to belong to the banking system; in fact, the effect of the exclusive privileges had been, to permit elsewhere in the country, every species of banking plan to be in full operation, save what was of the most solid and beneficial character. This state of things required a more efficient remedy than any which had hitherto been applied. Indeed, for some time, it had not escaped the attentive consideration of his majesty's government. Two years ago they had commenced a negotiation with the directors of the Bank, to see how far the company could be induced to forego a portion of their exclusive privileges. Their charter, as at present constituted, would expire in the year 1833, and the Bank offered to consent to a relinquishment of certain privileges, provided the charter in its main duration was extended to the year 1843. They agreed to allow other chartered companies, within the present prohibited distance, at once, provided the extension of the charter was conceded; that is, they were ready to give the public, instanter, the particular benefits which it could not otherwise acquire until 1833, provided the main operation of the charter would be allowed to survive till 1843. This, however, the government refused to call upon parliament to grant; but it pressed upon the Bank the greater advantage which the company would obtain in the administration of their own affairs, by the increased safety and security which would result from the adoption of the plan then under contemplation. The government had lately again pressed this matter upon the consideration of the Bank, and had submitted to the directors the benefit which both the company and the public would derive from its execution, accompanied, at the same time, with a direct and unequivocal assurance, that there was no intention of extending the present period of their chartered rights. And here he was bound to say, that the manner in which the Bank directors had met this proposition deserved the highest credit. It should always be remembered, that the conductors of such a corporation had difficulties to contend with which could not be felt by others who were not bound by the same interests, nor constituted in the same privileged manner. The directors had, however, acquiesced in the proposition made by his majesty's ministers, which they engaged immediately to submit to the consideration of a court of proprietors. The plan, if carried into effect, would place the banking system of this country upon the same footing as in Ireland, where companies were allowed to establish banks, with any number of partners, fifty miles from the capital. The same relative distance would be sixty-five miles in England; and at that distance it was proposed to establish banking companies with an unlimited number of partners. When he alluded to the reluctance of the Bank directors to abandon, all at once, rights which they felt were secured to them by charter, it was, he repeated, too much to complain of them for such hesitation. They were charged with the protection of the particular interests of the Bank; and though it was the object of the government, in their communications with the directors, to make it clear to them, that the rights they were charged to cherish would not be prejudiced by the concession required

at their hands, still it was not to be wondered, that men held tenaciously to the maintenance of enjoyments exclusively intrusted to their protection. It did not follow, because these private interests persevered in wishing to retain their peculiar privileges, that therefore they were right in their judgment as to their value; on the contrary, he believed they were wrong in this respect, and was persuaded, as he had stated to the parties, that if the Bank surrendered at once the whole of its exclusive privileges they would profit rather than lose by the concession. Still, if they thought otherwise, nobody had a right to wrest from them a privilege, with which they were legally invested. This should not prevent him from doing justice to their motives; and he felt no hesitation in avowing, that throughout his intercourse with the Bank of England, the directors had uniformly manifested the most anxious desire to promote the general interests of the country. He might occasionally differ from them upon points of general policy; but he had no right to find fault with their mode of managing the affairs intrusted to their guidance; and sure he was, that none would be found more ready than the Bank of England had been, to throw itself into the breach, when the country required a great effort. At the risk of their own interests, at the risk even of their own security, they had often gallantly come forward, and saved the country, by their timely aid, from evils of the greatest magnitude. With this experience of the value of the services performed by that great corporation, it would be monstrous injustice not to treat with fairness and proper consideration the opinions of such a body. They had now agreed to relinquish that part of their exclusive privileges which restricted the number of partners in banking concerns, and had refrained from requiring the condition of a ten years' extension of their charter, which, on the former occasion, they had declared to be a sine qua non of this concession. He had now stated in general terms the outline of his plan respecting the banking system. On a very early day he would submit a distinct proposition on the subject, when it could be fully discussed in all its parts. But he could not refrain, on the present occasion, from stating at once what were the general views of his majesty's government—what they felt to be the main causes of the existing difficulties of the country, and the measures best calculated to obviate their recurrence. There were two other points upon which he was desirous for a moment to dwell. And first he would advert to the produce of the revenue during the last year. Now, upon that point, the words of his Majesty's Speech were greatly below the mark; for the produce of the revenue had far exceeded his most sanguine expectations.—He had assumed, that the revenue of 1825 would have been less than that of 1824, by 600,000*l.*; and he had besides remitted taxes to the same amount. His calculation, therefore, had been, that the revenue of 1825 would have been less than that of 1824, by 1,200,000*l.*; and yet the House was aware how much more beneficial the result had been. He had certainly, by no means contemplated the having to return any duty in that quarter, though the amount returned on what had been paid was no less than 1,050,000*l.*; so that if that cause had not existed, the revenue of the year 1825 would have exceeded by one million that of the year 1824. But, in spite of all these circumstances, still the revenue of 1825 had exceeded that of the preceding year by 250,000*l.* He therefore trusted that the House would be satisfied that there was nothing of exaggeration in that part of his Majesty's Speech which alluded to the revenue of the country. He thanked the hon. and learned gentleman for the frank and uncompromising manner in which he had spoken out respecting commercial principles of great importance to the well-being of the country, and had declared that if the government remained true to the best interests of the community, they would not suffer themselves to be diverted from that system of policy in matters of commerce which was founded on the wisest principles. He entirely concurred with the hon. and learned gentleman, that the government would act with the greatest inconsistency if they abandoned those principles; and, speaking for himself, he would say, that to him it would be an eternal disgrace if he, in any way, were to depart from them. And though he and his colleagues were taunted by the hon. member for Grampound with having lost the countenance of some of their oldest friends, and cast for support upon their usual opponents at the other side of the House, still he would say that they were cheered by an

honest and effective co-operation. Nor would the hon. member's taunt drive him to reject the assistance of hon. gentlemen opposite, who had the generosity and candour to give him their important aid in this branch of his policy, and who could have no motive for taking such a part, save an ardent and disinterested attachment to the true interests of the country. It was with the highest satisfaction that he saw the principal men of every sect and of every party ready to give him their support in this branch of the public policy, and that he carried with him in his steadfast adherence to it, the concurring opinions of all the best-informed, and he would add, if he were not himself one of its most zealous advocates, of all the wisest men in this or in any other country.

Mr. *Ellice* rose, he said, rather to advert to one serious omission in the Speech from the throne, than to follow the right hon. gentleman through the various topics on which he had addressed the House. But, before he did this, he must offer one or two observations on what had fallen from him respecting the currency, and the measures proposed to place it on a more satisfactory footing. He thought the greatest caution should be observed in extending the system of banking, without providing efficient checks against the abuses to which recent events had proved it so liable. The Scotch chartered banks were, in some respects, to be regarded with as much jealousy as the country banks in England. They had not been behind hand in giving encouragement to over trading and speculation, and their issues of paper had at least been on an equal scale, with those during the last two years in this country. Their present situation was probably as much to be ascribed to good fortune, as good management, and they might not have been found better prepared than their neighbours, if the recent panic had travelled northwards, and exposed them to the same severe trial. In future legislation on this subject, it would be well to advert to the expediency of encouraging the collection of large masses of capital in the hands of persons issuing local notes, for which interest was allowed to depositors. The banker must look in this case for a profit beyond the interest, and was tempted in prosperous times either to lock up his funds, or to embark them in hazardous speculations with that object. On any reverse he was unable to collect his means to pay demands upon him, and the whole currency of his neighbourhood was exposed to derangement from his failure. He entirely approved of the determination to put an end to the small notes. It was evident they had banished all specie from circulation, and since parliament had decided on the resumption of cash payments, the currency of the country could never be on a secure footing, unless a certain amount of coin was maintained in circulation. He had been of this opinion on the passing of Mr. Peel's bill, and recent experience had added to his conviction on the subject. But, the particular object which induced him to rise was, to direct the attention of the House to the omission of all reference to the Corn Laws in his Majesty's Speech. Did ministers intend to allow them to remain on their present footing, with their boasted attachment to right principles and their determination to remove all restrictions from the trade of the country? Every branch of industry must be severely affected by the present measures of reform in the currency. Prices of other commodities would be materially depressed, and great stagnation consequently take place in all branches of our manufactures; and were the prices of all necessaries of life to be alone maintained by law to double the rate of every other country in the world? The House would very soon receive petitions from his constituents against the introduction of foreign manufactured silks under the act of 1824; and with what appearance of justice could they refuse to listen to their complaints, while the importation of corn was prohibited? What better reason could be urged for a standard import price of corn, than of silk or any other commodity? It was madness to persevere with their experiments on the manufacturing interests of the country, unless they were prepared to go forward and supply the principles of free trade to the trade in corn, and he lamented to see by this omission in the Speech, the ruinous sacrifice of all right and just principles which ministers were willing to make to the prejudices on this subject, and the more powerful interest by which they were supported. But they must either proceed, or be prepared to retrace all their steps, and he hoped this question would be pressed on parliament by the strong and general voice of the country.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the right hon., the chancellor of the Exchequer had carried them back to former years in the course of his speech, but had forgotten to point out what appeared to be the principal cause of all the distress about which he had occasion to speak. Without intending to disapprove of the speech of the right hon. gentleman, he must enter his protest against the praises which he had heaped upon the Bank of England. It appeared to him just as if an incendiary were to be praised, because, after he had kindled the flame, he endeavoured to put it out. If the Bank of England had known the true principles of banking, or if it had taken example by the events of 1793, it would never have allowed the course of exchange to remain for seven whole months against this country. He however hailed the proposition of the government as the commencement of better times, though he could not but regret that no bank was to be permitted within sixty-five miles of the metropolis; for if they were wanted any where, it was in London itself, in order that there might be something like competition to keep the Bank of England at bay. The right hon. gentleman had taken great credit to himself for the prescience with which he had pointed out the course of the revenue; but, in so doing, he had taken care not to go back to that period at which the government had been so lavish of their promises as to the reduction of taxation. Did the right hon. gentleman's speech, he would ask, hold out the smallest hopes of reduction in the military establishment of the country, which was tearing it to pieces? In the year 1793, when the country was at war, four millions and a half had been found sufficient to pay the military establishments at that time. And, what was the amount required at present? Something between nine and ten millions; and, at the very time that they were receiving assurances from his majesty of there being every prospect of a continuance of peace. In 1793, the whole taxation of the country did not exceed eighteen millions, while its parochial assessments were not more than two millions. What was the case at present? The taxation of the country amounted to the incredible sum of fifty-five millions, and the poor rates and parochial assessments to six or seven millions annually. In such a state of things it was mere fallacy to talk of relieving the distresses of the people by putting down one pound notes. The people could not be led astray from the contemplation of the real source of their sufferings, by such theories and absurd opinions. They would inquire, and see that wasteful expenditure of the public money, the profligate sinecures and unnecessary and overgrown establishments, were the evils to which all their hardships were attributable. It was in vain to speak of securing the property of the country by putting down one pound notes or by any regulations by which bankers would be prevented from issuing paper without its actual representative in money. Make banks as secure as you please, individuals placed at the head of them in the receipt of large profits would still indulge in wasteful and lavish expenses. Lightly come, lightly go. Men would squander money who could create it as they pleased. That was not what the country required, but a confidence in the administration—a reliance on those who directed its finances, that not a shilling would be called for which the public service did not require, and that every reduction compatible with its safety would be made. The right hon. gentleman had spoken at much length of the increase of country bank notes in the last year, above preceding years. He had stated, that the issue of 1820 was 3,400,000, the issue of 1821, 4,300,000; and the issue of 1825, 8,000,000. But, what inference could be drawn from that fact, when he admitted, at the same instant, that the issue of Bank of England paper, in the same year, was diminished seven millions? What more could be collected from the statement than this, that the superabundance of local notes supplied a vacuum created by the diminution of Bank of England paper? Thus, in whatever shape the subject appeared, whatever attempts were made to mislead the public mind by misrepresentation—the slightest inquiry tended to show, that these evils were partial and temporary, and that the true and deep-rooted source of all our distress and suffering was the extravagance of government, in continuing to maintain establishments oppressive and unnecessary, and in the wasteful expenditure of the treasures of the country. Let the House recollect the report of the finance committee at the close of that most expensive war in which the country had been so long engaged. That report stated the necessity of still keeping up a large establishment;

but, at the same time, it held out a hope that there would be a gradual reduction of our expenditure, according as the continuance of peace should enable us to free ourselves from that military system, in which, in consequence of our connection with the continent, we had unfortunately entangled ourselves. Than such a system nothing was more absurd. It was not our element. Every attempt to rival the powers of the continent in the maintenance of a large military force, was unnatural on the part of this country, and must always tend to our serious injury, if not to our utter destruction. Reverting, however, to the finance report, to which he had alluded, he observed, that the committee had, after great deliberation, held out a prospect of a gradual reduction of the taxation of the people. But, what had been the result? In 1817, the amount of the taxation on the people, including the expenses of collection, was 52,300,000*l.*; in 1818 it was 53,979,000*l.*; in 1819 it was 53,200,000*l.*; and so on until 1823, when it was 53,600,000*l.*; and in 1824, when it was 53,700,000*l.* After ten years of peace, therefore, notwithstanding every hope of an amelioration of their condition had been held out to the people, no amelioration whatever had taken place; but as great an amount as ever was deducted from the produce of their industry. Was he not then justified in blaming his majesty's ministers for the unmeaning Speech which they had just heard? He was not fond of making invidious comparisons; but, let the House look at the speech of the president of the United States, and then let them look at the Speech which had been just delivered, and see what a perfect blank it exhibited. He wished his majesty's ministers would take a lesson from other states. He wished they would take a lesson even from some of the states of Germany. Bavaria had set a noble example last year, by the reduction of half its military establishment. It would be infinitely more honourable to his majesty's government to reduce the army, instead of maintaining it in its present extent, and with all that frippery and foppery by which it was so disadvantageously distinguished. While our manufacturers were starving, while a man with his wife and five or six children were unable to obtain more than seven shillings a week—the Guards were covered with gold lace, and with all the absurd paraphernalia of military decoration. There was scarcely a family of any distinction in the kingdom of which some individual was not enjoying either an army or a navy pension, while the great body of the population were suffering extreme distress. It was a farce to say that the misery which we had been lately experiencing was attributable to the country banks. The right hon. gentleman himself could not believe that such was the fact, although he knew that there were a number of good-natured gentlemen in that House always disposed to give credit to any statement that he might think proper to put forth. The poor at large ought not to be misled by any mis-statements of that nature. He contended that there was in his Majesty's Speech not one word of what ought to have been there. Let the House recollect that on some frivolous pretence or another, our military establishment had been actually going on increasing for the last three years, until it had arrived at an amount which was altogether unwarranted by the circumstances of the country. He gave the right hon. secretary of state for Foreign Affairs great credit for the manner in which he was endeavouring to dissociate this country from her connection with the continent; although he had hoped that the right hon. gentleman would have gone even further than he had done. We ought to avail ourselves of all those advantages which were peculiarly our own, to break off all our continental intimacies. It was evident we did not require a large military force for internal purposes. If it were maintained for the purpose of keeping down our own population, he would ask, if that was the best way of making them happy? Would it not be much better to render them contented, by the diminution of our expenditure, by the reduction of sinecures and pensions, and by reverting to the expenditure of 1793? As it was, he would take upon himself to prove, that in no year during the late war, not even in 1815, the year of our greatest expenditure, in which it amounted to 72,000,000, was the weight of taxation so heavy as now, if valued by that standard, by which alone it ought to be valued—gold. Much less gold was taken from the people in taxation, at the period to which he had just alluded, than had been taken from them during the last three or four years. He could not concur in thinking, that the predictions of ministers as to our increasing prosperity were realized. On the

contrary, he thought that, unless something was done, and that speedily, in the way of reduction, our condition would become much worse. It was said, that our immense military establishments were rendered necessary by the extent of our colonies; but he denied that our colonies required such expensive establishments, if they were managed as they ought to be. Ireland, he supposed, was looked upon as a colony which called for a large military establishment. But, why should that be necessary? Why not put Ireland in that condition in which she could support herself? Those who treated her as a conquered country, must take the consequences; but he felt that a different system would not only have the effect of taking the burthen from England, but of making that island, what she had not hitherto been—productive of great advantage to us. The system pursued with respect to our foreign colonies was not less extravagant. The people of England, under the present system of mis-management, were, year after year, called upon to pay large sums on account of most of our colonies, which were not repaid by any advantages to us. Vast sums were expended to keep pampered minions in power, over whose conduct no salutary check was exercised. Look at the Cape; look at every colony we possessed, and then say if they were not all burthens to the country. If he turned his eye to the eastward, he could not agree with what was stated in the Speech from the throne. In the King's Speech of last year, it was declared, that "the interruption of tranquillity in India had been occasioned by the unprovoked aggression and extravagant pretensions of the Burmese government, which had rendered hostile operations against that state unavoidable." That, he asserted, was contrary to truth. The information which had been laid on the table showed that hostilities had been most unjustifiably commenced on our part. The consequence must naturally be, a great increase of the East India debt. And, let it be considered, that an increase of that debt was in fact an increase of the debt of the people of England. What had ministers put into his Majesty's mouth on this subject in the Speech under consideration? "His Majesty regrets that he has not to announce to you the termination of hostilities in India. But the operations of the last campaign, through the bravery of the forces of his Majesty, and of the East India company, and the skill and perseverance of their commanders, have been attended with uniform success, and his Majesty trusts that a continuance of the same exertions may lead at no distant period to an honourable and satisfactory pacification." This was inconsistent with fact. Undoubtedly, wherever a British soldier in India, or a native soldier in the service of the company, had met with the enemy, he had distinguished himself by his valour and good conduct. But, what had been the course of the war with the Burmese? Had our army met with the army of the enemy? Did the enemy wait the approach of our troops? Had they not uniformly retreated as we advanced? And a wise policy they had adopted in so doing. If all the other native chiefs in India had played the same game as the Burmese had been playing, the British government in India would have had little to boast of at the present moment. Our triumphs had been all of a negative character. They had been accompanied by a pestilence destructive of thousands. Eight thousand European troops had been carried to a spot ten times more deleterious than the marshes of Walcheren; a place wholly unfit for the momentary occupation of human beings. And, who was to blame for all this? His majesty's ministers, for having sent out to govern India a man wholly incompetent to that arduous situation; a man against whom all opinions—even, if he was rightly informed, the opinions of the directors of the East India company—were united. He had every reason to believe that the court of directors had no confidence whatever in lord Amherst's government. If what he had just stated was the fact, how inexcusable were his majesty's ministers in keeping in such a situation an individual who had proved himself so unqualified to the discharge of its duties! By so doing they rendered themselves parties to lord Amherst's proceedings; and made themselves deeply responsible for the consequences. Whether it was attributable to the Board of Control, or to the court of directors of the East India company he knew not; but certain it was, that the British empire in India was in a state in which it had never before been.—Upon the whole, he came to this conclusion, that, whatever measures might be adopted to alter or remodel the state of the currency—whatever measures might be

proposed to prevent an injurious issue of paper by persons whose property was not adequately responsible for its value,—all would be unavailing, unless the country was relieved from eight or ten millions of taxes—a remission which, he would venture his life upon the assertion, might be accomplished with the utmost safety; leaving all the duties of government to be carried on with much greater ease and with much more public benefit, than they were under the present circumstances.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, he was a friend to the general principle of free trade, but that he thought the silk-trade, under present circumstances, ought to be made an exception; or at least that the principle should not be extended to that branch of our trade, while the monopoly of the corn trade was allowed to exist. He would not press the subject at that moment; but, at some future time he should feel it his duty to bring it under the consideration of the House, for he was quite convinced that unless some alteration was made in the corn laws, it was impossible that the silk-trade could go on under the existing regulations.

Mr. *John Smith* was of opinion, that unless the chancellor of the Exchequer entered into a much more full explanation of his imperfect statement than he had given, the effect would be, to increase that panic and alarm, of the existence of which he must be fully aware. He entirely concurred with the right hon. gentleman, in most of his observations respecting the issue of small notes by private banks, and of the injury which had accrued therefrom in some instances; but, he must remind the right hon. gentleman, that the undefined manner in which he had alluded to the intention of allowing joint-stock company banks, with a greater number of partners, and with, of course, a very large capital, might have an effect injurious to many banks within sixty-five miles of the metropolis, unless he explained immediately the time when this proposition was to be carried into effect. Without such explanation his proposition might create an alarm, and produce a recurrence of the panic which they were all so anxious to prevent. He did hope, therefore, that before the close of this debate the right hon. gentleman would give some explanation on this point. He hoped that in any plan which might be adopted, no privileges would be given that would go to destroy the ancient establishments. He himself was a partner in one of a hundred years' standing, which, he would say, had conducted its affairs with character and respectability; but his own interest would never induce him to sanction the system of circulating one pound notes, which was inconsistent with the honesty and integrity of the country. The government should be careful not to do that which had been done in Scotland; namely, to banish every piece of gold out of the country. He threw out these remarks for the consideration of the chancellor of the Exchequer, who, he hoped, would distinctly state when, or whereabout, his plan was to come into operation, in order that establishments of character and credit might not be obliged to enter into competition with those powerful opponents, the joint-stock companies, without adequate notice. Unless he did so, he might be the cause of very serious alarm, and to an extent upon which he could not calculate. It was chiefly with the view of requesting this explanation, that he rose to address the House, but he could not sit down without adverting to that part of the Speech from the throne which alluded to the present state of Ireland. They had been told that his majesty had directed to have carried into effect the recommendation of certain committees, which had sat a year or two ago. He was glad to find that such was the intention of the government. Last year, and the year before, there was a committee of that House; and a more excellent and industrious committee never emanated from the House of Commons. The nakedness of Ireland was exposed, not only to the House, but to all England: all the subjects of complaint were examined, but not to the bottom. He wished to know whether that excellent committee were not to continue their labours? He was sure there was a part of the administration which felt the necessity of probing these circumstances to the bottom; and reasoning from the analogy of other committees, the necessity must be obvious. There was, for instance, the Commission of Education. He was persuaded the right hon. secretary (Mr. Peel), who had resided so long in Ireland, would never have tolerated the iniquitous practices and infamous jobbing, which the report of that commission disclosed, had he been aware of their existence. But, the fact was, the government of Ireland had not the power of going to the

bottom of the inquiry, it must be done by a committee of that House. He presumed that every gentleman who heard him, had read the evidence of the committee of last year. The evidence was extremely long — the report exceedingly short. That committee ought to be renewed, if it were for nothing else than the benefit of an additional report. The inquiry ought to be pursued further; for, in his opinion, it had only been half done.

Mr. *Cripps* defended the country banks from the imputations to which they had recently been so generally subjected. No one, he said, could judge fairly of their merits, except those who were interested in the subject. The failures that had taken place among them were principally owing to a want of knowledge on the part of those who had the management of the concern: the bankers who had a common share of prudence, had experienced little difficulty in weathering the storm. He did not know that the existence of one pound notes was so great an evil as seemed to be imagined. On the contrary, he was satisfied that their circulation had been beneficial to the public. Whatever might be said of country banks, a great part of the prosperity of the country was mainly attributable to the facilities and the indulgences which they had afforded. He was quite sure, that if the existing system were suddenly altered, or without great deliberation, an effect would be produced on the country which was not at all anticipated. In every part of England, and in the agricultural counties particularly, the country banks had, undoubtedly, lent a large part of their capital on mortgage. But, it by no means followed, that they had not obtained security. If, however, they were suddenly driven to call in all these loans, an alarm would be occasioned, the ultimate result of which no one could foresee. The debts due to them might be good debts; but, when the House saw, only six weeks ago, that any man who could not suddenly turn his parchments into gold was a ruined man, they might have some notion of the evil which a precipitate measure might generate. If left alone, eventually they might bring their affairs round; but, if suddenly compelled to meet a parliamentary measure, such as that alluded to by the right hon. gentleman, they might be driven to dispose of their property to such disadvantage, as not to be able to pay ten shillings in the pound. He had thought it his duty to say thus much, in order that it might not go forth uncontradicted, that country banks had occasioned great evil, instead of having materially contributed to the prosperity of the country; and in the hope that, whatever system it might be thought advisable to propose, it would be proposed deliberately; and with a view to the whole of the banking establishments of the country.

Mr. *Maberly* said, he could not express an opinion upon the proposed measures without offering his meed of concurrence in all that had been said of the conduct of the Bank of England, during the late shock to which the public credit had been exposed. He was ready to admit, that in what had been said of that body, justice only had been done them; and even if the right hon. gentleman had gone further, he would have been warranted by the course which the Bank had pursued, in circumstances more trying and extraordinary than ever a commercial body was placed in before. To their energy and determination, although in opposition to their usual principles, was the salvation of the country to be attributed. But, whilst he gave them praise where they deserved it, he was bound to say, that their good intentions might have been more beneficially developed, if they had not crippled themselves by the dead weight on mortgages. This, however, was an abstract operation, and he should not now go into it. All he should say was, that he did not think the difficulties which the Bank had contributed so largely to alleviate were attributable exclusively to the misfortunes of the commercial world, or to the failure of the country banks; for sure he was, that they had been much aggravated by the measures of the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues in deluging the country with so large an issue of their promissory notes. The weight of thirty millions of Exchequer bills was calculated to produce a great languor in the money transactions of the country; and he was sure that, if the Bank of England had not gone into the Exchequer market, and taken up those bills, the panic would have been ten times more dreadful. Indeed, he doubted whether, if this had not taken place, the dividends due in October or January would have been paid. It would be a neglect of duty not to remind the country that it was by the promptitude with which the Bank had come forward that the country was saved from

the consequences which the Exchequer bills of the right hon. gentleman had prepared for it. He hoped the experience would not be lost upon the right hon. gentleman; for if by another glut of Exchequer bills commercial distress should again return, the same relief could not be calculated upon from the Bank; since, with the exchanges against us, they would be obliged rather to contract than enlarge their circulation, and the effect would be, to enhance instead of alleviating the difficulty. The dividends then could not be paid, and there would be no alternative but to make the Bank of England commit itself by an over-issue of paper; which would reduce its credit to the level of the country bankers; who, though they might have assets for the discharge of all their claims, were still reduced to the greatest distress, from an impossibility of raising money in London. He could appeal to an hon. director over the way for a corroboration of all that he was saying; if that hon. member felt himself at liberty to speak out.

Mr. *Pearse*, as one of the directors of that establishment, rose to defend the conduct which the Bank had pursued during the late crisis, and to deprecate the tone of triumph in which the right hon. gentleman had described the result of his late negotiations with that body. The advances which the Bank had made upon stock, and also those which it had made upon mortgages, had been made with a view of alleviating the embarrassments of the commercial and the agricultural interests, and not with any view of beating down the rate of interest of money. The Bank had acted with the utmost prudence and consideration in the whole of the late tremendous convulsion; and he thought that the House would agree with him, that the public had never been brought into any scrape by its proceedings, or when it had got into a scrape by other means, had ever been unassisted by the Bank with the means of getting out of it. He had been connected with the Bank for the last forty years—a period as eventful as any in the annals of the world, and he would solemnly say, with all that experience before him, that he never saw the directors influenced by unworthy motives. In all questions that came before them, they considered the interest of the country as that which was paramount to all others, being well aware, that when that interest was secured, their own profits would follow as a matter of course.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that although he had not expected that any difference of opinion would have been excited by the speech of his right hon. friend, still, as some strange misconception had arisen upon several of the topics contained in it, he was anxious to state to the House the manner in which he had himself understood them. The House had been addressed by two hon. members from different sides of the House, who had both evidently misconceived the meaning of his right hon. friend. The misconception of one of the hon. gentlemen was perhaps natural, and at any rate might be accounted for; but, how the misconception of the other had arisen, it was impossible for him to imagine. The hon. gentleman opposite seemed to apprehend that his right hon. friend had a plan for erecting joint-stock banking companies or corporations, which would swallow up all the existing establishments. Now, the plan of his right hon. friend went no further than to take off, with the consent of the Bank of England, a few years sooner than it would otherwise expire, a prohibition, of which the effect, by the concurrent opinion of all who had spoken upon the subject, was to make weakness, instead of strength, an inherent quality in the system of country banking. It required not the agency of his right hon. friend, that the evil which the hon. gentleman apprehended should take place in the year 1833; that there should then be no longer any privilege in the Bank of England to prevent more than six persons from becoming partners in the same banking concern; that that privilege should then cease with the existence of the Bank charter; and that such corporations and joint-stock companies as the hon. gentleman appeared so much to dread, should then rise up in all parts of the country. But, under what circumstances, he would ask the hon. gentleman, would that evil occur, supposing the present law to remain unaltered? On the one hand, the privilege of the Bank of England, which prevented the spreading of a wider basis for the transactions of country banks, would continue to exist till the year 1833; and, on the other, there was by law in the country banks an unlimited power to issue small notes up to precisely the same period. Now, if the undoing of the privilege of the Bank of England was so fraught with mischief as the hon. gentleman seemed to

think, how would that mischief be aggravated, if it were to operate upon an unlimited and unrestricted issue of country bank-notes? His right hon. friend had two objects in view in the measure which he proposed. The first was to accelerate the period in which the prohibition was to be removed, which, as he had before said, entailed weakness upon the country banks; and the second was, by limiting the issues of those banks, to make the new power given to them operate with less suddenness upon the existing establishments. Whether the consequence of withdrawing the privilege of the Bank of England would be that new banks would be created all over the country, or that the ancient and long established ones would widen their foundations by coalescing with new partners, he could not pretend to decide positively at present. The hon. gentleman seemed to assume that the latter consequence would take place, but, as appeared to him, without sufficient reason. He could see no reason why, when the power of widening the basis of country banks was given, it should not operate to add a seventh, or an eighth, or even a tenth partner to the existing establishments, rather than to create new establishments all over the country, to rival and extinguish the old ones. Surely, every establishment would have the power, either by an accession of strength, or a consolidation of interests, to guard against the evil which the hon. gentleman appeared to apprehend. With respect to the idea of his right hon. friend pressing his measure unawares upon the country, he must say that nothing had fallen from him which indicated any such intention; and, if his right hon. friend had not dwelt more at large upon the details of his measure, it was, that it had been so often before parliament, or at least so long before the public, that it was only necessary to refer to it, to bring it to the minds of gentlemen who were at all acquainted with the subject.—There was another point which the hon. gentleman appeared to have overlooked in his view of the question. If it were an evil, it was one that the Bank could create at present on any day in the week; for it could create branch banks in all parts of the country; and if there was a necessity for a more solid system of banking, the alternative was, either that the Bank of England should establish branch banks throughout the country, or that power should be given to other parties to establish banks for themselves. Now, if the establishment of either were likely to be ruinous to the existing establishments, which he denied, that ruin was equally inevitable, whichever side of the alternative was taken, whether the Bank of England was the agent for such branch establishments, or whether advantage was taken of the Bank of England withdrawing its privileges for the purpose of allowing others to establish banks, taking and absorbing the old banks, or coming into collision with them, if so it turned out; which he for one considered very unlikely. The country was in this situation, that one of these measures it must embrace—either it must permit the Bank of England to exercise its privilege of establishing branch banks all over the country—which would be equally fatal, if the competition of confidence and capital can be fatal, to the old establishments, with the creation of new banking corporations, —or, it must adopt the plan of his right hon. friend for taking advantage of the Bank of England's surrender of its privilege to establish new banks, on a wider basis, not so formidable as rivals as the Bank of England, nor possessing that quality of repulsion to existing establishments which it did—or, thirdly, the country must remain in its present situation, with a clear view of all the mischief resulting from its present insecure and insufficient system of banking. Between these three alternatives, if he might be permitted to use such a solecism, the House and the country had now to choose. As to the last of them, he believed that there would be no difference of opinion. The House seemed inclined to agree, that it was not that measure to which it would resort. As to the other two, it was clear that the latter—he meant that of incorporating more than six partners into each establishment—would, even on the principle avowed by the hon. gentleman himself, be more effectual for the purpose which it was intended to answer, would be established with the least shock, and would be best calculated to save the interest of existing establishments. It was impossible to discuss this subject without feeling it to be due to the Bank of England to say, in addition to the praises which had been bestowed on it with no niggard hand for its conduct in the administration of its affairs, that nothing became it more than the grace with which it had consented to strip itself of this part of its privileges. It was idle to say that the privilege was odious—it

was idle to say that it was a monopoly: it might be both odious and a monopoly; still it was an inherent privilege of the establishment. By law they had it; and from the possession of it not even the boasted omnipotence of parliament could disturb them. It was an unfair view of human nature and of the principle of possession, to treat such a sacrifice with levity. Such a rare occurrence as the voluntary abandonment of a possession, which was not merely a grace or ornament, but was valuable as a source of profit, deserved the highest panegyric. The Bank of England might have kept it, because they had it—because the law had given it them—because no man could extort it from them. The Bank of England might have kept it in order to make a bargain with the public for some other consideration. The Bank of England might have kept it in order to prevent the rivalry of the country banks, which they might apprehend in those parts of England of which they had hitherto had the exclusive possession. They might have kept it without assigning any cause for so doing, except their own will; but they had yielded it up to the public for reasons which did them immortal honour. If they had yielded it unwillingly, their conduct was the more laudable; if willingly, still credit was their due, because they had studied the public interest first, and had seen that their own individual profit was ultimately involved in it. They had consented, for reasons with which the House had nothing to do, to a measure to which they had formerly refused their consent, unblameably he had no doubt. They had now done that which they had long been solicited to do; and having done it, his right hon. friend meant to draw from it an advantage—not unkindly, not ungenerously, not in a spirit of triumph over the Bank, as had been that evening suggested. He could assure the House that no such feeling existed in the breast of his right hon. friend, but that his right hon. friend was ready, upon all occasions, to render justice to the Bank, for the manner in which it had conducted this discussion, and also for the conclusion to which it had consented to bring it.—An hon. gentleman who had spoken early in the debate, had made, among a variety of remarks, which he did not intend to notice at present, one which he could not allow to remain unnoticed. The hon. gentleman seemed to think, that ministers were extremely culpable for not discouraging the wild spirit of speculation which had contributed so much to the present distress, and that they were wanting in their duty, because, when the various schemes of last year were discussed, they did not attend in their places to give a detailed opposition to every one of them. Now, it appeared to him to be a convenient and seemly rule, that those whose duty it was, to attend to the public business of the country, should abstain from taking an active part in the consideration of any measure which merely affected individual interests. He would say for himself, that he had always endeavoured to act by that rule—that he had never given a vote on any private business since he had become a minister—and that he believed the same rule to have been followed by all his colleagues. It appeared to him, he repeated, that such was the safe and seemly rule of conduct; because, if he could reconcile it to his sense of duty to break through it in one instance, he might be induced to break through it in more; and a practice might thus grow up, from which many suspicions might arise, unjust and unfounded, as they would be at present, but still impossible to be entirely avoided. But, he would ask, had there been no warning given to the country on the part of ministers? Had there been no occasion, during the fever which existed last year in the public mind, in which the king's government had declared that they would not advance a farthing to the aid of any difficulties which might ensue from excessive speculation? He might now, as a matter of history, allude to what had occurred on a former occasion in another place. One of his majesty's ministers,—he meant his noble friend at the head of the Treasury—speaking as the organ of that department of the state, and also in his capacity as a member of the government, had taken an opportunity in March last, not many weeks after the commencement of the session, and before one single bill had passed, to hold out to all who were engaged in those speculations, that they were running wildly into them; that it was the essence of a free government not to interpose any legislative let or hindrance to the current of individual enterprise and industry; that those who entered wildly into extravagant speculations, did so upon their own risk and responsibility; and that it was

the fixed resolution of his majesty's government not to extend any pecuniary assistance to the difficulties which were likely to arise out of them.* As far as the voice of government could be heard, it was heard through the country clearly and intelligibly, and the more clearly and the more intelligibly, because the declaration did not grow out of any measure in which the government took a part, but was fastened accidentally on a measure with which it had nothing to do, and was not therefore made to be treasured up for such a crisis as had now occurred, but to prevent its occurrence. Unfortunately, that warning had been disregarded: the difficulties which had been anticipated had subsequently arisen; and it was a little too hard that the government should now be taunted for a want of caution, on that very topic on which it had spoken so very explicitly. His majesty's ministers were aware that the present topic was that to which the minds of men were most intensely directed, and to which the consideration of parliament must naturally and inevitably be called, immediately after its assembling. There was no want of attention to that topic in the Speech which they had that night heard from the Throne. If the House measured it by its proportion to the whole Speech, hon. members would find that it occupied the greater part of it, and that it threw every other topic into the shade. It was felt by every member of the cabinet, that every person in the country was anxious to know how this great subject would be treated: and they had determined that the most manly mode of treating it would be, to treat it as the most urgent and important subject which parliament could have under its consideration.—He trusted it would be thought that he had now gone far enough in his observations upon this subject; because, if he went further, he must be carried into a wide field of observation, into which he had neither the inclination nor the power to enter at that moment. An hon. gentleman opposite, who had addressed them on the third bench, had left untouched no topic which had been agitated either during the last war or the present peace. [Mr. Hume observed, that he had not mentioned the last war.] If the hon. member had omitted to rip up the measures of the last war, he congratulated him upon it, as he would have the opportunity of coming back upon it on the first set speech he might make. But, as the hon. member would have a future opportunity, which he had no doubt he would embrace, of bringing all the subjects which he had that night mentioned regularly under their notice, he hoped he would not think him (Mr. Canning) disrespectful, if he passed by them at present without remark. The hon. member had told them, that the Speech of last year was contrary to the truth, and that the Speech of this year was inconsistent with fact. What nice metaphysical distinction there might be between "contrary to truth," and "inconsistent with fact," he for one could not see. Perhaps the hon. member, as lord rector of a learned Scotch university, was gifted with acuter perception, and could enlighten the House upon this distinction without a difference. There were, however, some propositions in the speech of the hon. member, upon which he should venture to retort the hon. member's own expressions. The hon. member said, that there had been no reduction of taxation since the war. This assertion he would venture to say was "contrary to the truth," as all the world, with the exception of the hon. gentleman, knew that there had been a reduction of taxes to the amount of twenty-seven millions. The hon. member then proceeded to say, that although no reduction of taxation had taken place during the ten years since the war, the reductions during the last five years had been fewer than before; that was, in plain English, that they had been fewer than none. This assertion, therefore, he would venture to call "inconsistent with fact" [a laugh]. He took these assertions as fair specimens of the other topics in the hon. member's speech—topics, which he supposed were only mentioned by the hon. member, as preludes to future debates, on which, when they should arise, he would endeavour to set the hon. member as right with regard to his arguments, as he had now set him right with regard to his facts. One question had been asked him by an hon. and learned gentleman, to which he should take the present opportunity of giving an answer. The hon. and learned gentleman had asked him, whether the treaty between this country and Brazil had not been refused ratification? He entirely agreed with the hon.

* See the Speech of the Earl of Liverpool vol. xii. p. 1194.

and learned gentleman as to the character of the stipulation to which he had made reference. Nothing could be more objectionable, or more impossible for his majesty's government to adopt. There were likewise other stipulations in that treaty to which he should be equally unwilling to give his assent. The fact was, that the treaty had been negociated without any instructions, and even contrary to the views which the English government entertained upon such subjects. Yet though it had been negociated without instructions, if it had been unexceptionable, it would have been ratified by this government; but objectionable as it now was, he had no hesitation in saying that it never had, and never would be ratified. He had only another observation to make before he concluded, and that was, that under the pressure now existing in the country, he could not think it advisable that the state of the Corn laws should be brought under consideration during the present session.

Mr. *Calcraft* contended, that the distress under which the commercial world was now labouring had not been entirely occasioned by excessive speculation and over-trading. The government and the Bank, by contriving to beat down the rate of interest, had done far more mischief than the present system of country banks. Why had nothing been said against the London banks? It was their stopping which had stopped the country banks, and the evil ought to be attributed to the right cause. He defended the country banks. From the great competition among them, it was mere matter of option whether a man took their notes or not. If he did not like them, he might take them to their banking-house and compel them to pay him in specie. What objection was there to this part of the system? Of the whole number of country banks, not one-tenth had stopped; and of those which had been compelled to suspend payment, many had paid, or would be enabled to pay all demands upon them. He would be the last man to allude unnecessarily to distresses which all must deplore; but when so much had been said respecting the failures of the banks, he might be permitted to remind the House that there had been other failures with which the country banks had no connexion, and which had been the occasion of infinitely greater distress, than all the country banks put together. The system which the Bank of England had adopted, of lending money on mortgages, and on the security of stock, was the beginning of the distress. When they found that, owing to the state of the money market, people could get money at so moderate a rate of interest, that the Bank could not make that profit by their notes to which they thought they were entitled, then it was that they placed themselves in competition with the other bankers who were lending money at a smaller discount. He did not wish to detract from the merit which was fairly due to the Bank, but he felt it his duty to animadvert thus freely upon what he took to be a principal cause of the existing distress.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the hon. gentleman was mistaken if he imagined that he had recommended an issue of one pound notes as a remedy for the present distress. It would have been preposterous for him to do so; because he had already stated his belief, that the issue of one pound country bank notes had contributed to the existing evils; and this observation applied with equal force to the Bank of England.

Mr. *Grenfell* said, he felt it due to the Bank of England to say, that when the distress was at its height, the directors had come forward in the most liberal manner, and thrown themselves into the breach, to avert, as far as they could, the danger which threatened the country.

Mr. *Baring* said, that the chancellor of the Exchequer, in omitting to state at what time he intended to carry his measure into effect, had prevented the House from judging of its expediency. It would make a great difference whether it was to take effect within two years or within six months from this time. It could not be denied that the present state of the country was ominous. He had no hesitation in attributing that distress to the extent to which the circulation of paper money had been pushed about eighteen months ago, and for which the country banks, and, he was sorry to say, the Bank of England were answerable. He did not mean now to discuss at any length that responsibility; but as this was, in his opinion, the only part of the conduct of the Bank that was liable to animadversion, he thought it would be neither just nor prudent to withhold this observation. The Bank of England, by the facilities which they afforded, had been the authors of that dangerous redundancy of money, that

gave rise to the wild speculations which some time ago abounded in every part of the country. The country banks had added to this redundancy in a much more mischievous manner. The Bank of England exercised a discretion as to the quantity of paper-money which it put out; but the very business of a country bank was to put out all the paper it could, and this, as every gentleman acquainted with country banks well knew, was their constant practice. On market-days they employed persons to go out, and not only to put out as much paper of their own as they could, but to withdraw from circulation all the paper of the Bank of England, and substitute for it their own. By these means the country was saturated with paper-money, and that redundancy produced, which had been the parent of the existing distress. And all this had been done without the least reference to the effect which it must naturally have upon the rate of exchanges, which, as persons acquainted with the nature of such things well knew, should be the regulation for the issues of paper-money. It would ill-become him to reflect with severity upon persons who had made adventurous speculations in commerce, because, if they were sins, he should perhaps have as much to answer for as any body; but, little as he was disposed to look too strictly at such hazardous undertakings, he must say, that neither in this, nor in any other country, had enterprises so rash and ridiculous entered the minds of men, as many of those which had been produced in London during the last year. It seemed as if all Bedlam had broken loose on the Royal Exchange. The same frantic spirit overran the country, and, like an epidemic disease, extended itself every where. He did not mean to say that this was not far beyond any such cause as the redundancy of money he had alluded to; but it was, nevertheless, true, that this fictitious surplus was the fuel by which the fire was fed. The greatest exertions were made by every body to get rid of their capital. The bankers in London, their agents in the country, and the customers of both, were actuated by the same universal desire to put out their money in whatever way they could. Then, all on a sudden, the very reverse of this system came into practice. A panic seized the public. Men would not part with their money on any terms, nor for any security, and the consequence was general distress. The extent to which that distress had reached was melancholy to the last degree. Persons of undoubted wealth and real capital were seen walking about the streets of London, not knowing whether they should be able to meet their engagements for the next day. It was impossible that any thing could be more liberal or sensible than the conduct of the Bank of England at this juncture; but the causes lay too deep to be removed by any thing that the Bank of England could do. Their assistance might, and did in a great measure, relieve the distress; but they could not cure it. The over-issue by the country banks was the main cause by which the distress had been so widely spread; and, as every body in the country was deeply concerned in the subject, he thought that the more this cause was investigated and explained, the more it would be likely to be remedied. If this crisis were allowed to pass without speaking the truth, it would be only laying the foundation for future evils. This feeling it was, that induced him to say what he had said respecting the Bank of England; and, while he bore testimony to the promptitude with which they did all in their power to alleviate the distress, he would censure them for the share which their conduct had had in producing it.—With respect to the remedy which was to be now applied, there must be in the first place great caution in the manner of its application. If his majesty's ministers should announce that they meant to draw in the powers of country bankers, every man who had capital invested in those banks would prepare for it by drawing out his capital, because he would not know how long he should be permitted to keep it on the same terms as at present. This made it also necessary that some further explanation should be given respecting the proposed measure. He did not mean to press for that explanation now; but he hoped that it would be afforded at some early opportunity. He had always considered the one-pound country bank notes as a great nuisance, and the cause of frequent distress. He thought that before the right hon. gentleman proceeded with the measure which he contemplated, he should be furnished with the exact amount to which the issues of these one-pound notes had arrived. This information would afford the greatest facility to parliament in dealing with so important a subject; and he would suggest, that a short bill should be passed

calling upon bankers to make returns of the amount of all notes issued within the last three years. The reduction of these notes, necessary as it was, could not begin, until the present state of excitement had passed over. It would rather be wise in the parliament to afford to the country bankers every facility, as far as was prudent, in conducting their affairs. As a skilful surgeon, who was desirous of replacing a dislocated limb, would not apply his screws, however necessary that operation might be for the recovery of his patient, until the fever had passed, so in the present state of things, however desirable it might be that the system of issuing one-pound notes by the country bankers should be restrained, this was not the time in which this operation could be safely performed. The amount of those issues might be taken more or less correctly, at eighteen millions. These, it would be remembered, must be replaced by gold. It would not do to go to the Bank of England for notes to replace this sum; gold, and nothing but gold, could be substituted for it. He had heard frequent allusions made to the charter of the Bank of England, and to the terms on which it should be renewed, when the time should arrive for its renewal. He was of opinion that it was for the real benefit of the country that the highest legislative distinction should be given to the Bank, and that its dignity should at all events be kept up, investing it at the same time with only such power as might be thought safe; because it was evident, that it would be impossible, in the event of a war, to go on two campaigns without the assistance of the Bank; and, to make this assistance available, the means of the Bank must be considerably enlarged. The government could at no time take credit to itself for not having suspended the Bank payments, because this was to assume that it was at the option of government to do so. They could never either hasten or avoid that event. They might throw a cloak over it when it was about to fall, but they could do no more. The country must have some circulating medium. Nothing would induce the government to consent to paper being made that medium, but the failure of all the others; and this failure would be an inevitable act of bankruptcy. Whoever might be the chancellor of the Exchequer when that event should happen, must come down to the House with a long face, and, as the late Mr. Pitt did, say he was very sorry that the Bank had gone, but that the government and the currency of the country could not stand still. He hoped that we should long continue to live in peace; but he was not the less convinced that it would be impossible to get through two campaigns in a time of war, without this being the result—unless the Bank system should be built upon a much broader basis. Upon this subject he wished to draw the attention of the House to the marked difference between the individuals with whom that institution had to deal at the time of its commencement, and those who at present stood in the same relation to it. At the period he alluded to, the Bank stood like a sovereign surrounded by little dependencies; now, some of the persons who had dealings with it possessed of themselves capitals to an amount which then had never been heard of as being possessed by one man. Another alteration which he believed must of necessity be adopted, was to make the circulating medium here, as in other countries, silver as well as gold. Without this, the Bank even might be put in danger. There was a great quantity of silver sent to England from the Spanish colonies. This must now be sent over to France or Holland for the purpose of buying gold, which was then only an article of merchandize, subject to the same accidents as all other merchandize, sometimes to be obtained, and sometimes not, and which it was always in the power of speculators, if it should suit their purpose to prevent coming to this country at all. He did think, that, as to power, the Bank of England was a mere pigmy to what it was a few years ago; and that something, therefore, ought to be done to renew and increase it. Unless, indeed, in this respect, and in regard to an improved standard, something of the kind he had mentioned were speedily adopted, they might all go to sleep, under the flattering impression that they had established something like a permanent currency; but some morning they would infallibly awake, and find that that season of alarming difficulty to which he had been adverting had at length really arrived.—He would say one word with respect to the proposition for establishing larger banks. Undoubtedly, the surrender of that part of the Bank charter, which was the present obstacle to their establishment, was very desirable, and would

be a sacrifice which it would be the more creditable in the Bank to make, because men were never observed to part with power which they had long possessed, very willingly. But he confessed that he could not anticipate all the beneficial results which some hon. gentlemen seemed to expect from extending these banking partnerships. He, for one, did not imagine that country gentlemen would be fools enough to part with their money, in order that they might become the sleeping partners in such concerns. He trusted they would not be tempted to do any thing so ridiculous. He had seen too many instances of gentlemen who did not at all understand business, engaging in it to their own prejudice, not to warn country gentlemen to beware how they allowed themselves to be persuaded to become country bankers. He had heard of the extraordinary faculty of some creatures sleeping with their eyes open. Such a quality should that man possess who became a dormant proprietor in any concern of importance. He should be a sleeping partner with his eyes open, to watch and scan the motions of those who were about him. If it was desirable to form banks in the great commercial towns, such as Manchester, Bristol, and York, which should be perfectly in possession of public confidence, it should be done either by the means of branch banks from the Bank of England—a plan which, however, from its interfering with the present provincial interests—might not prove very palatable—or they should, by an act of incorporation, allow a number of gentlemen to embark certain portions of their capital, say 10,000*l.* in a joint banking company. That sum, from ten men, would be 100,000*l.*; an amount, in his opinion, quite adequate to support the respectability of the ordinary run of such concerns. There were very few men of capital who would not, he apprehended, be induced, by the ordinary gains of such establishments, to become one of a company of such a kind as he had described; but no prudent man would or ought, after what had taken place in the last few months, risk his whole property by becoming a sleeping or acting partner in the ordinary mode. He was not prepared to say, that a rule, exempting the property of the individuals composing a company, from all liability beyond their subscribed capital, would be proper for the ordinary purposes of trade; but for banks, it was his fixed opinion, that, under all the circumstances, it would be found both to confer adequate respectability, and insure sufficient confidence. The object, however, which induced him to rise, was to warn ministers of the danger of tampering with that description of our public securities, and to implore them, in their consideration of the time for the adoption of their proposition, to reflect that security should be bestowed as soon as possible. One word as to the Silk trade. The right hon. gentleman had that night declared, that it was the firm determination of his majesty's ministers to adhere to the principles which had regulated their conduct with regard to that trade. That declaration had been received with considerable cheering; and he was not one of those who felt any disposition to find fault with the candour and firmness of that declaration, because he thought, that if such was the determination of government, the sooner it was known the better. The alterations which it had been deemed expedient by government to adopt in the trade, had undoubtedly produced a great deal of immediate misery. Those alterations he had given a decided opposition to on former occasions; and he was ready to acknowledge, not only that such opposition was overruled by a large majority of that House, but that he had found scarcely an individual to support him. He still remained firmly of opinion that France would beat us in this trade. Political economists said, "Very well; so much the better; if it be a trade that requires such large protections and indulgencies, the sooner it is got rid of, the better for the country." With gentlemen who reasoned in that way, he would not argue; for he could not look with indifference on the extinction of a long established manufacture, or on the inevitable misery of the many thousands which such a result would occasion. In alluding to that part of his Majesty's Speech which related to foreign affairs, he could not avoid expressing his unqualified admiration of the way in which the whole of the business of that department had been conducted; or abstain from giving utterance to his conviction, that however slow the right hon. Secretary might have been supposed in obeying the unanimous feeling of the country, with regard to the South American states of Portugal and Spain, still that the very slowness complained of had been the means of arriving at the

surest possible conclusion. In the present artificial state of our circumstances, and when the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Huskisson) had been defeated in his views of reciprocal treaties with France and the continent, nothing could be more important to England, than the cultivation of our connections with the states of the New World; and nothing could be more conductive to that end, or more likely to give those relations permanence, than the firm, honourable, and candid declarations of the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs. What he wished particularly to call to the attention of the House was, the treaty concluded between the Brazils and Portugal, under the mediation of this country; that treaty he took to be objectionable, in so far as that it was concluded between two contracting parties, separate at present, but likely at some period to become one; for, although there was an emperor in Brazil, and a king in Portugal, still there was no provision against the son succeeding his father upon the throne of Portugal. It appeared to him, therefore, that we had mixed ourselves up with an uncertain contingency, with a something which might, after all, be rendered nugatory by the amalgamation of the two contracting powers.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, that although he had listened to the observations of the hon. member for Taunton with all the attention so justly due to his profound commercial knowledge, and extensive experience, yet, as so many opportunities would occur for a better examination of the various topics touched upon in the course of his address on this occasion, he would not go further than to reiterate the determination expressed by his right hon. friend, of not going into any details, until the House should be more fully in possession of the nature of the measures which it had been resolved at the present crisis to adopt. This much he might, however, say, that his right hon. friend would, at the earliest possible moment, submit his proposition for their consideration. The House would, he trusted, when any delay was complained of, recollect that it was only on the coming morning, when any plan of the House; adopted by the Bank directors, at the suggestion of his majesty's ministers, could be by them submitted to the approbation of the proprietors, whose trustees they were, and without whose sanction no measures could be resolved upon between government and the Bank. It was impossible, therefore, to lay any proposals before the House, until the directors had obtained that favourable decision from the proprietors, which was anticipated by them and the government. His right hon. friend had, however, stated very clearly that measures would be adopted, which, he trusted, would have the effect of preventing a recurrence of those disasters which had recently convulsed the commercial world. He agreed with his hon. friend, that no change of the currency was politic or safe that was not gradual; and that at a time when, if they hastily withdrew a large portion of the paper currency, they had not the means of supplying a substitute, such a principle was of still more consequence. It was not, therefore, the intention of his right hon. friend to propose the withdrawing of eighteen millions of paper from circulation, but only that portion of it which consisted of one and two pound notes, amounting to perhaps six or seven millions: but even with that amount it was his right hon. friend's intention to deal with caution and care; indeed, he proposed to allow those notes to wear themselves out, guarding, however, against the possibility of any fresh issues; a plan by which they would gradually disappear from circulation, without any sudden inconvenient limitation of the currency of the provincial towns. As to the period at which the change of the constitution of the country banks was to take place, by permission of the Bank of England, he did not see any great difficulty likely to arise from its happening in a short time. He, for one, did not understand that it was the intention of the Bank of England to establish great banking companies in districts of the country, but to allow any persons disposed to form a company of more than six partners to carry on the business of bankers within a certain distance of the metropolis. He could see no well-founded alarm, in the project of allowing any of the establishments which had held firm during the late pressure, to add an additional number of partners to the existing firm. In order, however, to give time to those most interested to look about them, it was thought desirable to specify a period, after the passing of the act, for the commencement of the new establishments. Six months, he thought would be sufficient to enable bankers to wind up their concerns in any old estab-

lishment, and to make their arrangements for going into a new one. With regard to the services which had been rendered to the public by the Bank of England, there could only be one opinion. They had been important, liberal and seasonable; and, what was more, he firmly believed that, in saving others, the Bank had actually saved itself. One word more, upon a subject which had been described as a very alarming and astonishing circumstance: he meant the silk company. The truth was, that some time last year, a few persons, who thought that the cultivation of the mulberry tree and the propagation of the silk-worm might be successfully attempted in Ireland and the colonies, applied to government for its approbation of their plan. He (Mr. H.) had accordingly recommended a charter to be given to them; and after it had been granted, he was requested to become honorary president. It was at the same time asked both of him and of the noble earl at the head of the Treasury, what number of shares they should be willing to have at their disposal; a question to which both the noble lord and himself had replied, that what they had done was solely on the ground of public good, and that they neither expected nor wished to derive any private advantage from connecting themselves with the experiment.

Sir *M. W. Ridley* suggested, that in order to carry into effect the intentions of government, a short bill should be passed to prevent new issues, as the one pound notes were not to be withdrawn till they were worn out. Many insinuations, he said, had been thrown out against the country bankers, which were as unfounded as they were unnecessary. That the country bankers had been the means of producing the commercial distress, he entirely denied. They had no power of over-issue; they were unable to raise a fictitious credit: they could not keep in circulation a single note longer than it was absolutely necessary. The Bank of England, when not required to pay in gold, could issue as many notes as they pleased; but the country bankers, who had always been obliged to pay in gold or Bank of England notes, were necessarily restrained from any over issue. The right hon. gentleman had made a calculation, as to the number of country notes in circulation. The best authority on that point was the Stamp office. He had estimated them at different periods at three, five, and eight millions. The amount varied materially, as the public confidence was stronger or weaker in the Bank of England. When this confidence was diminished, then there was an increased circulation of country notes. As this confidence returned, the country notes gradually disappeared, and those of the Bank of England took their place. The great fault committed by the Bank of England was in taking upon itself the dead weight, and lending upon mortgages. If, instead of extending it had contracted its issues, the country would not be in its present state. The right hon. gentleman had said, that six months would afford sufficient time for the bankers to wind up their affairs. He was of opinion that the right hon. gentleman could hot have meant this. Much had been said about the greater solidity of a banking establishment from the number of partners. For himself, he thought that that bank was the safest which had the fewest partners. Every man knew the state of his own affairs, but he could not be equally conversant with those of another person. With regard to the one-pound notes, it was possible that it might answer the purpose of a few bankers to put as many of them out as they could, and send them to markets and country towns, but this could only serve a temporary purpose. Every country banker who continued a forced circulation, would soon find himself in an unpleasant situation, if not in the list of bankrupts. It might appear wise in theory to contract the circulation of the one-pound notes, but if it were not carried into execution with the greatest caution, the business of the country could not go on. It was a mistake to suppose that country bankers issued their notes solely with a view to profit. They issued them more with a view to the convenience of others.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, he did not rise to object to any of the plans indicated by the chancellor of the Exchequer; but, he could not let the debate close, without remarking, that the right hon. gentleman, and all those who had followed him, utterly blinked the main question, which was intirely a question of prices. Mr. Gurney said, he had always disliked the bankers' circulation, and particularly detested their one pound notes. He had always been convinced, that it was their circulation, that was, their bidding against each other in credits, which had reduced the banking business to the minimum of

profit on the operations performed: and, if the right hon. gentleman could place the circulation of the country on a better footing, there was no class which would be so greatly benefitted as the bankers themselves. But how the proposed changes could be carried into effect, and golden sovereigns at 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* an ounce could be substituted for the present paper issues, was to him totally incomprehensible. The very endeavour to do it (for it never had been effected) occasioned all the pressure of 1821—2; and, under the existing mass of public and private engagement, if that substitution could be accomplished, it would occasion a greater and more general ruin, than had ever been witnessed in this or perhaps any other country.

Mr. *Denman* said, he did not mean to question the conduct of the Bank of England, nor the justice of the high eulogium passed upon it. The directors had a duty to perform towards the proprietors; but as far as the public were concerned, he did not conceive that they, more than any private bankers, were bound to consult the public interest. The interests of the proprietors alone they were bound to promote, when they did not interfere with the rights of others. The hon. member, as the organ of that powerful establishment, in giving the reason why it wished for a change in its charter, had thought fit to eulogise it, and said that every thing was right and proper. He had lauded their judgment, liberality, and promptitude. This reminded him of the epigram of Prior—

"To John I ow'd great obligation,
But John unluckily thought fit
To publish it to all the nation,
So John and I are more than quit."

The balance had been fairly struck; whatever good had been done by the Bank had been more than acknowledged. He did not agree with the right hon. gentleman opposite, that parliament could not interfere with the Bank. Nothing could be more simple than to limit their issues; nothing more easy. He admitted, that nothing could be more clear and satisfactory than the explanation of his measures by the right hon. gentleman; but he should not do his duty to his constituents, if he did not express his disappointment, that not a word had been said on the Corn laws. On this important subject not a word had been said by the King's ministers except that one right hon. gentleman had said, that they did not mean to proceed with the subject this session. While the principles of free trade were acted upon with regard to those articles which administered to the comfort and luxury of the rich, was it dealing fairly with the poor man to withhold the same benefit from him, and to uphold the price of the chief article of his subsistence? This could not continue without bringing misery and desolation among thousands and hundreds of thousands. There was an amount of distress among the people, of which ministers were by no means aware. In a multitude of pursuits the best workman in full employment could not earn more than six, seven, or eight shillings a week. How was he to support and clothe himself and family out of this wretched pittance? Foreign manufactures were now allowed to compete with us in our markets at home, while we were shut out from the possibility of entering into competition with them abroad, by the high price which the landlords exacted from the poor man for his bread. Upon this subject they would assuredly hear much more in the course of the session. Delay would not lessen the urgency of its demands on the consideration of the House; for attention would, by and by, be forced to it by the cries of perishing thousands. He did not quarrel with the principle of a free trade; he only objected to its partial application. He did not blame ministers for repealing prohibitory laws; but, he contended that while a free trade was allowed in minor articles, it should be extended to the most important article of life, bread. There was another important part of the Speech which related to the circulating medium, and from which much of the present distress was stated to have arisen. In this he could not agree. He saw no difference between the issuing of one and two pound notes, and ten pound notes, so long as there was no compulsion to take them. The amount of the note made no difference, unless that, when the misfortune came, it fell upon those who were least able to bear it. From the view taken of it by some hon. members, the cause of the present distress appeared to be a subject of mystery, and the Speech from the throne did not account for the existence of the evil, nor did it point out a remedy. After telling them, that the country had been visited with a panic, it stated that there was nothing to account for it. There was no war, no great de-

mands on the resources of the country. No sudden desolation had swept its ravages over the land. These very circumstances, this apparent want of all cause for this distress, was, to him, most alarming. It was not, however, so difficult to account for it. That detestable measure, which released the Bank from the necessity of keeping its engagements, was the root of the evil. With those who, in 1819, attempted to apply a remedy for its removal, by a repeal of the Bank Restriction act, and a return to cash payments, he had agreed; but its utility had been destroyed, by adding at the same moment three millions to the burdens of the people. If, when that act was repealed, a reduction instead of an increase of taxes had taken place, the remedy would have been effectual, and the country would not now have been overwhelmed with distress. The only remedy for the present evil was, the most rigid economy. He could not help sighing after every guinea which, wantoning, like the man in the fable, over their dreams of false prosperity, they had lavished upon every extravagant proposition submitted to them. He sighed after the grant to the duke of Cumberland, the increase of the judges' salaries, for which there was no necessity, the two millions given to build new churches, of which there was no want, and that at a time when taxation was weighing down the energies of the country. Permanent relief was to be obtained only by a reduction of taxes. Ministers must not be satisfied with reducing by little and little: they must remove the evil by a large and substantial reduction. The people said, and naturally, "if you, by imposing a large amount of taxes, raise the price of bread, we must go to the parish, and then you must support us." Government should recollect, that the security of property depended upon lowering the price of this necessary of life. When paupers increased, and parishes were largely burdened, the less secure did property become. He repeated, that the matter would not be allowed to sleep. Humble but earnest petitions would be presented to them, entreating them, that while laws are made to administer to the comforts of the rich, those should not be allowed to continue which visited the poor with ruin and beggary.

Mr. Alderman *Wood* said, he had a word to offer upon the sufferings of his constituents, than whom there were not a more industrious people in the empire. His majesty out of his generous feeling, had given them large relief; but, large as it was, it did not amount to the receipts of one week in a time of employmen. It was impossible that they could compete with the foreign manufacturer, while two-thirds of the value of the article consisted in labour. Repeal the Corn laws, give the country a free trade in that article, and put the labourer on an equal footing of taxation with other countries, and they would be able to meet all foreign competition.

The Address was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, February 3.

MR. BROGDEN.] The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved the usual Sessional orders. On the resolution appointing him chairman of the committee of Ways and Means,

Mr. *Brogden* observed, that he had for a considerable period discharged the duties of the office to which he had now been re-appointed, he trusted, with zeal and diligence. Circumstances had occurred since the last session which made him desirous of occupying the attention of the House for a few minutes, in order that he might exculpate himself from the gross imputations which had been cast upon him in the newspapers. Under those aspersions on his character he had suffered greatly. It would be impossible to describe how severely his feelings had been wounded. It had been said, that no person suffered unjustly, at least without some ground; but he was an example to the contrary. In the matter he referred to (the Arigna Mine concern) he had the satisfaction to say, that 150 gentlemen had met at the city of London Tavern, who had completely absolved him and another member of the House from any improper conduct in regard to the company, and had requested him to continue a director. The hon. member added, that he would not descend to minute details in order to rebut the allegations in the newspapers; a proceeding at law would be instituted against one libel. He had received a letter which would abundantly show the conviction entertained of his entire innocence in the affair referred to, and which he proposed to read to the House. The hon. member, however, on searching, found that he had omitted to

bring it with him; but he stated the substance of it, which was, that the subscribers absolved Mr. Brogden and Mr. Bent from all corrupt participation in the monies of the company; that the sums particularly specified, which were indeed placed in their hands, were not improperly received by them; and requested that those gentlemen would continue in the direction. Being thus absolved, he trusted that the confidence of the House would not be withdrawn from him. He courted inquiry and publicity. There was nothing he wished so much as to have his conduct fully and completely investigated, and were it not beneath the dignity of that House, he would wish that he might have an opportunity of going before a committee into those details, and producing that evidence, by which he could, beyond the possibility of question, put to shame his accusers.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.] On the motion for bringing up the report of the Address on the King's Speech,

Mr. *Whitmore* took occasion to regret, that the question of the Corn-laws was not to be brought forward by ministers in the present session. He had much confidence in the sincerity and good intentions of government; but, looking at that question as the one which must form the groundwork of every thing like a system of free trade, he could not help fearing that some unfortunate influence was operating to postpone its discussion. So satisfied was he, that without a proper settlement of the corn question, all attempts to keep up a scheme of free trade must be ineffectual, as ministers did not mean to bring it forward, he should feel it his duty to bring it on himself. He regretted thus to undertake a task which he had hoped to see performed by abler hands; particularly as government stood, in a great degree, pledged to the discussion of the subject. He was glad to hear the gentlemen opposite declare, that the present distresses (which he trusted would be transitory) would make no difference in the views which they had acted upon during the last session. The stoppage in the silk trade arose, in a great degree, from the apprehension of the masters as to the effects of the new measures; which apprehensions would be entirely removed when those measures came into full operation. The change which was proposed to be made in the system of our currency, as far as it was developed, had his approbation; but he thought that the suggestion thrown out last night by the hon. member for Taunton, deserved serious consideration. The making silver a standard as well as gold had been held objectionable, upon the ground of the variations to which silver would be subject; but if there was a probability of remedying that difficulty, he thought the plan merited full discussion. The hon. gentleman sat down by giving notice, that at an early day he should bring the Corn laws before the notice of the House.

Sir *Charles Forbes* applied himself to that part of the Speech which touched upon the affairs of India; and reminded the House, that the observations of the hon. member for Montrose, on the preceding evening, were unanswered. He concurred with that hon. member as to the rise and progress of the war in India, and trusted that what he had said would have due weight with the House. The state in which we were now placed as to India was extremely critical, and he thought that upon the Burmese war there could be but one opinion; namely, that it ought to be ended as speedily as possible. The war had now lasted two years. It had assumed the character of a war of extermination. We might force our way, by the blood and valour of our soldiers, to the Burmese capital; but when we got there, we should be no nearer a termination of the contest than before. The Speech of last session had told the House, that none of the other native powers of India were inimically disposed towards us. The Speech delivered from the throne this session did not venture to tell us so much. If, as he contended, the country had involved itself in an unjust and dangerous war, the best way to escape would be by retracing their steps. He regretted that the wishes of the country had not been complied with by the recal of lord Amherst, a nobleman who, however amiable his private character, was evidently incompetent to discharge the high duties of governor-general of India. If we did not adopt different measures, we must make up our minds to lose India.

Mr. *Curwen* said, that the manufacturers were grossly mistaken, if they attributed any part of their distress to the operation of the Corn laws. If rightly understood, they would be found to be highly beneficial to the commercial interests of the country.

Mr. *Wynn* said, he had not replied to the hon. member for Aberdeen's observations on the subject of India on the preceding evening, because he thought the whole matter an episode to the general discussion, and because he knew the hon. gentleman too well to have any apprehension that he would be long without speaking upon the subject a second time. The right hon. gentleman then proceeded to defend both the principle and the conduct of the Burmese war; and declared, that the declaration of lord Amherst was fully borne out by all facts. Could any one deny, not merely that actual aggression had been committed against us by the Burmese, but that a disposition to the commission of such aggression had for a long time been manifested? As for the conduct of our troops, and the success of our arms, who could impeach either? If an enemy constantly flying before us, did not bear testimony to the valour of our troops, he did not know what the hon. gentleman would desire. As for any unfriendly disposition among the native powers of India towards us, he denied its existence. It was true that our army, or a portion of it, had suffered severely from sickness. This did not arise, however, from any peculiarity in the climate, but from those causes which must always, in a greater or less degree, attend upon campaigns in India. By the last accounts, however, the sickness was diminishing; and by the next, he had hopes that it would be found lessened in a still greater degree. He had not the slightest doubt that the valour of our soldiers, and the ability of their leaders, would bring the contest to an honourable and fortunate conclusion. He should hear of such a termination with as much pleasure as any man. But though it was our policy to avoid war as long as it could safely be avoided, it was impossible for us to overlook insults, or to shrink from entering into a contest, where it was obstinately presented to us.

Mr. *Hutchinson* denied that his hon. friend had insinuated any thing against our troops in India, he had only lamented, that those troops were put in a situation where, instead of coming in contact with the enemy, they encountered contagion. Many individuals acquainted with India, and sensible of the imminent danger of a war there, were far from being convinced of the necessity of the present contest. For himself, he discovered a culpable omission in the Speech from the throne. His way of looking at it was, to consider it as the declaration of ministers. He entirely agreed with the chancellor of the Exchequer, that the king's ministers were bound to take notice of the public embarrassments. They could not blink them. It was their duty to meet them manfully, and to set about finding a remedy. Accordingly, in the first paragraph of the Speech, the distress was announced, and a remedy was suggested. He hoped that confidence would be restored; for the return of confidence would in itself be a powerful remedy. There could be no doubt of the resources of the country. All that was wanting to bring them into successful play, was the return of confidence. But, the omission of which he complained in the Speech from the throne was, that it contained no reference to the affairs of Ireland: They were given to understand, that the exertions of his majesty were unceasing to unite in lasting amity and concord all the nations of the earth. He applauded that disposition: it was wise, it was humane. But, then, it would have gladdened him to hear of exertions to do for Ireland that which was so anxiously attempted on behalf of all other nations. He had hoped to have heard of some attempts to secure peace and concord for his native country. A pledge of that nature given at the beginning of a session would have been most satisfactory to the people of Ireland. It was very true, that some indications of a favourable change were perceivable. He rejoiced to see it. He believed that there was a general tranquillity at present, as well as increasing industry; and, perhaps, they might indulge a hope of returning prosperity. But they were without a proper assurance of the continuance of that tranquillity. On many points of the national policy, there was a ruling spirit seen to prevail in the cabinet: with respect to the state of Ireland, it was not so. Now, how were the people of Ireland to be secured in the enjoyment of their present tranquillity, unless they saw a ruling spirit in the cabinet ready at all times to exert itself for their relief? And how could they feel this, while on every page of the Statute-book they could read the causes of their degradation, while nothing was attempted to remove their oppressions? Could this state of things continue? We were at present on good terms with France. We had no jealousy of her growing greatness, though she was

moving forward in a splendid career. She was a great military power. She was increasing in resources, and was no less considerable now than she had shown herself under Napoleon. Her trade was prosperous, and her revenues so abundant, that the government was about to reduce nineteen millions of taxes. We might not remain on terms so pacific as at present, and those resources might be turned against us, as they had been by her former master. Should that period ever arrive, this country ought to be in a situation which would render all her power available. But that could not be with respect to Ireland, unless means were applied to include her in the general system of amity and co-operation. Approving of much of the Speech, he had thought it necessary to say thus much on behalf of Ireland, as there seemed to be little wanting to entitle ministers to the support of all parties. but the extension of their own principles to the interests of that country.

Mr. *Lockhart* said, he did not feel so much apprehension as had been expressed by many hon. members, at the late agitations in the commercial affairs of the country, because he considered occasional paroxysms of that nature as inseparable from the enlarged and growing bulk of the trade and resources of this great nation. He could not agree in attributing any of the distress which had prevailed to the Bank of England, though he was not prepared to oppose the measures which were to be proposed for opening the traffic to other adventurers. He did not see the reasons which limited the Bank of England to a radius of exactly 65 miles. As to improving the business of banking by enlarging the number of persons in the firm, though the existing law limited them to six, it was seldom that a country banking establishment contained so many partners as the law allowed. He really believed that the average did not exceed three to a firm of all the establishments which existed. But suppose an alteration of the law should enable bankers to enlarge the numbers of the firm, were they sure that persons of property would come in, and, by placing all their disposable funds in a bank, subject themselves to the hazards of trade, and the probable visitation of the bankrupt laws? It was clear to him that they would not. And then, would that bring the public the security so much desired? On the contrary, would not the chances of insolvency be increased by the addition of every new partner to the concern, which must be answerable for every imprudent member who might happen to join the firm? The law maxim "testes ponderentur non numerentur," was equally applicable to bankers. It was not their wealth, nor their probity, which could give the proper security. Had he to choose a person with whom to confide the management of his affairs, he would not be guided merely by the integrity of the individual, but by his firmness, his acquaintance with the world, and his accurate knowledge of mankind. Ask practical men as to the causes of the late failures, and he would venture to say, that they would agree that the greater part of those cases were attributable, not to deficient property or want of moral character in the parties, but to want of firmness, skill, and general knowledge of the world. The securities which were likely to be proposed would bring no relief to those cases. Lands could not be easily made available to the purposes of such securities. Another objection to taking an increase of the number of partners as a ground of security was, that it was likely to have a contrary effect, and to gather into a firm a number of specious and designing individuals, who would be mistaken for an opulent body of men, until their schemes should prove by their failure how undeserving they had been of public credit. He approved of much that had been advanced on this subject by the hon. member for Taunton, whose knowledge of the subject entitled his opinions to great respect. His hon. friend had pointed out the glaring defect of such supposed securities, and had directed the attention of the House to the practice in France, where private individuals might invest small sums in banks, without rendering themselves liable beyond the amount of those small sums. In this practice, the public had a full and sufficient security. Many gentlemen would have no objection to embark portions of their property thus far, though they would feel a repugnance to subject themselves to the possibility of a commission of bankruptcy.

Sir *T. Lethbridge* said, he thought it was rather premature to discuss a measure before its details were known. His Majesty's Speech was, in his opinion, calculated to do great good. It expressed the determination of ministers to take the subject into their hands, and to bring it

openly and candidly before parliament. Such a promise could not fail to allay the existing ferment, and restore confidence. He differed from the hon. member for Bridgenorth, who had attached blame to ministers for not taking up the subject of the Corn laws, and originating some measure with respect to them. He thought that resolution entitled to the greatest praise. The question of the Corn laws was the most intricate, and important of any which could be agitated. It was clearly improper to bring it forward at a time when the attention of parliament was to be taken up with an important alteration in the currency of the country. The question of the currency naturally went first, and must be set at rest, before they could undertake that of the Corn laws. He believed the public coincided with the view taken by ministers, and that there was no anxiety out of doors to see the Corn laws altered. He was fortified in this opinion by frequent intercourse with the silk-throwsters of the county which he represented. He was rejoiced to say, that the manufacturers, though under severe distress, took a more correct view of the Corn laws, and were by no means dissatisfied with the prices of agricultural produce. They were suffering distress, however; and it would be his duty, in a few days, to urge their earnest application to the House, that they would not persevere in enforcing the principles of free trade. In making that appeal, he should discharge his duty, though he had but feeble hopes of making an impression. He always had strong doubts as to the usefulness of those principles; but when he heard them advocated from the Treasury bench, and lauded by the most enlightened members of the opposition, he felt somewhat shaken in his conscientious opinion, which was, that the principles of a free trade, however beautiful in theory, were not applicable to the commerce of this country. They were told last night, that the new laws relative to the silk trade had not yet been tried, and that therefore it was impossible to judge of their effect; but, from all he could learn, the present distress was not owing to over-trading, or to the large quantity of goods in hand, but to the apprehension of a great influx of silk from France. The duty of 30 per cent, he was assured, was a mere mockery; that it could be evaded without difficulty; and that a manufacturer at Lyons would undertake for 15 per cent, to furnish in this country, free from all risk to the purchaser, any quantity of silk goods. The establishment of Joint-stock banks, such as were recently set on foot in Ireland, and had been found so beneficial in Scotland, would be the most certain mode of fixing the currency; which, under the present system, was in a state of constant fluctuation, making prices high on one day, and low on the next. He believed, that the absorption of the one and two pound notes would lead to great inconvenience. These small notes were, for the most part, in the hands of the poorer people, for whom the legislature ought to be anxious; but if these small notes were taken away, how were these people to be paid?

Mr. *Hume* was astonished to hear the doctrines which had been broached by the hon. baronet. If the views of the hon. baronet were correct, the currency of the country was always regulated by the Corn laws. As well might he have contended, that the monopoly of the tea trade enjoyed by the East India company, or that any other monopoly, had such an influence on it.

Sir *T. Lethbridge*.—I said that the Corn laws were closely allied to the state of the currency.

Mr. *Hume* said, he did not see what possible connexion existed between them. The hon. baronet had stated, that the sentiments of the manufacturers were altered on the subject of the Corn laws, and that they now viewed them in a favourable point of view. He would not deny, since the hon. baronet had stated the thing as a fact, that there were some manufacturers in Somersetshire who would rather pay 1*s*. for the quartern loaf than 6*d*.; but, he would take upon him to say, that the sentiments of these men were not in unison with those of the great body of manufacturers throughout the kingdom. And in the name of that large body—in the name of every class of persons in the country, the land-owners excepted—he protested against such a misrepresentation of their opinions on this question. The general feeling of the country was opposed to all kinds of monopolies—to the East India monopoly and the Bank monopoly, as well as to that of the landed interest—because it was now pretty well understood, that the payment of all those monopolies came out of the pockets of the people. He had opportunities of knowing the senti-

ments of the manufacturers as well as the hon. baronet; and he could take it upon him to say, that they were not afraid of an extension of the principles of free trade, provided no reserve was made, and that those principles were applied to the article of corn as well as to all others. The silk trade, in particular, did not fear a competition with the manufacturers of France, if the corn trade were thrown open; except, perhaps, in a few fancy articles. He believed ministers were well inclined to carry their principles of free trade to corn as well as to all other articles; but they feared the influence which might be opposed to them on the corn trade, and from what had occurred in another place, there was no doubt that influence was very considerable. But, notwithstanding the existence of that influence, let ministers propose the measure, and it would, he little doubted, be carried in that House; and then, if it failed in another place, the country would see where the blame lay. He now came to the observations of the president of the Board of Control. He regretted extremely that a question involving the interest of millions should be considered an episode scarcely worth answering. This indifference on so important a subject was the more to be lamented, as there was not a free press in India. That had been put down by the most arbitrary and illegal proceedings. It was no defence to say that the governor had a power of acting according to what he judged best for the interests of the country. He had undoubtedly a great discretionary power; but he was not to use it in a manner inconsistent with the laws of England; and these laws did not sanction such proceedings. He had no right to put down the press, until it had been proved that the use of it, in any particular instance, had been illegal. With respect to the Burmese war, the right hon. gentleman had said, that he (Mr. H.) was bound to prove the assertion, that it had been wantonly commenced. The present was not the time for entering into a discussion on that point; but he would at the proper season be prepared to contend, that there was not, in the papers which had been produced, any document to show that the Burmese nation had discovered a disposition to commence the war. It was true that a subject of ours had been murdered in their territory; but they admitted the fact, and said that, as far as they could, they would punish the murderer. "The man," said they, "by whom it was committed, is a bandit; if you can take him, we will hang him for you with the greatest pleasure." They could not do more; for they had not the means of reaching that individual. He had no doubt, that had the Company an efficient man at the head of their affairs, the war might have been avoided, and a great waste of blood and treasure prevented. But, the inefficiency of the governor-general was not denied even by the Court of Directors. It was publicly stated, that he did not possess the confidence of that body; and yet he was still kept at the head of their Indian government. The feeling on this subject was general. He could quote many documents which would put that fact beyond doubt; but he would refrain from it at present. He could not, however, refrain from reading one extract from a letter which had been received from a highly respectable military officer in Calcutta; and the sentiments contained in this letter were the same as those of every letter which he had seen. They all concurred in representing lord Amherst as an excellent man in private life; but, as a public man, as a governor-general, the general opinion was that he was altogether inefficient. The letter contained these words:—"There was never a more inefficient governor. He is imbecile in the extreme." Now this was a part of the subject which had been altogether blinked by the right hon. president of the Board of Control. That right hon. gentleman incurred a serious responsibility, unless he could show that there was even one man in England who concurred with him in the fitness of the noble governor for his present situation.

Mr. *Fremantle* said, he could assure the House, that every one of the public letters which had recently been received, held out confident hopes of a successful termination of hostilities in India. The hon. gentleman had said, that the Court of Directors had no confidence in lord Amherst. This statement was disproved by the fact, that the directors had, if they chose to exercise it, the power of recalling him; which they had not done. Ought the conduct of such a man to be judged of by private letters? If there was any part of the noble lord's conduct on which the hon. gentleman could lay his finger in the way of censure, he was warranted in doing so; but let him do it on ostensi-

ble grounds, and not on the irresponsible communications of private individuals.

Sir *C. Forbes* said, it should, in justice to lord Amherst, be stated, that he was not in any degree implicated in the unfortunate occurrence at Barrackpore. He therefore hoped, that, in justice to the noble lord, all papers relating to that transaction would be laid before the House.

Mr. *Wynn* could not see on what ground it should have been thought, that lord Amherst was implicated in the affair of Barrackpore. He was in possession of a variety of documents, which would remove any such opinion; but he did not think it necessary to lay them before the House. Equally unfounded were the reports which were daily published as extracts from private letters from India. The writers of those letters filled them with idle gossip, as if they wished to ascertain how far the credulity of their friends in England would go.

Mr. *Hume* defended the authenticity of the information contained in the letters to which he had referred. As to the affair at Barrackpore, the conduct of the government was most blameable, in neglecting to give any answer to the applications made to them on the part of the troops which had refused to march. The then adjutant-general was now in London, and therefore the truth of the circumstance to which he alluded might be easily ascertained. Another ground on which he objected to the conduct of the Indian government on that occasion, was the manner in which it had behaved towards the native officers of the refractory troops. It was admitted, that they had remained faithful to their engagement to the Company, and refused to join their mutinous troops; yet, after this, and because they had not foreseen or prevented what had happened, every one of them was dismissed the service, as no longer worthy of the confidence of the Company. Was this a just or reasonable course towards men who had acted with such fidelity; or was it any encouragement to officers who might be placed in similarly delicate situations? Again he asked, what was the conduct of the government towards the unfortunate men who had been convicted of mutiny? They were (many of them men of high caste) condemned to work in irons on the public roads. It was true this was a commutation of the punishment of death, but he believed there was not one of them who would not prefer being shot, to dragging out an existence in that degraded situation. Was the conduct of the Indian government approved here at home on this point? On the contrary, the moment the circumstance became known here, did not the Court of Directors, and the Board of Control, concur in sending out orders for the unconditional discharge of the unfortunate men? All he wished for, was correct information on this subject. If he should find that he was in error, he should be most happy to retract what he had said.

Mr. *Fremantle* observed, that the hon. member was greatly misled, if he believed that no communication was made to the refractory troops for ten days before it was found necessary to resort to force. The very reverse was the fact; for, from the time that they first objected to march, up to the period when the fatal termination of the affair occurred, communications were every day made to them, and no pacific effort that could be resorted to was left untried. An offer was made on the part of the general officer in command, to refer the case to a court of inquiry, and the troops were told to send those of their body in whom they could most confide, to attend that court, and explain the nature of their complaints; and that if found reasonable, they should be immediately redressed. They refused, however, to listen to any terms of accommodation.

The address was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Monday, February 6.

Mr. Cowper—Clerk Assistant.] Lord Gifford read a letter from Mr. Cowper, stating that, from infirmity he was unable to attend to discharge the duties of his office, and begging that their lordships would be pleased to accept his resignation. He further begged leave to lay before the House the deep sense of the gratitude he felt for the attention they had paid to him during forty-one years he had been their servant.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, there could be but one opinion, as to what ought to be done on hearing the letter which had just been read. He was sure their lordships would take the earliest opportunity of recording the sense they entertained of Mr. Cowper's services. He therefore

gave notice, that to-morrow he would bring forward a motion on the subject.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 6.

Bank of England—Communications relating to Alteration in Exclusive Privileges.] The following Papers were laid on the table of the House:—

Copies of Communications between the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, relating to an alteration in the Exclusive privileges enjoyed by the Bank of England.

No. I. *Fife House, Jan.* 13.

Gentlemen.—We have the honour of transmitting to you herewith a Paper, containing our views upon the present state of the Banking System of this country, with our suggestions thereupon, which we request you will lay before the Court of Directors of the Bank of England for their consideration. We have the honour to be, gentlemen, &c.

(Signed) Liverpool.
Frederick John Robinson.

The Governor and Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England.

The panic in the money-market having subsided, and the pecuniary transactions of the country having reverted to their accustomed course, it becomes important to lose no time in considering whether any measures can be adopted to prevent the recurrence in future, of such evils as we have recently experienced.

However much the recent distress may have been aggravated, in the judgment of some, by incidental circumstances and particular measures, there can be no doubt that the principal source of it is to be found in the rash spirit of speculation which has pervaded the country for some time, supported, fostered, and encouraged by the country banks.

The remedy, therefore, for this evil in future, must be found in an improvement in the circulation of country paper; and the first measure which has suggested itself, to most of those who have considered the subject, is a recurrence to gold circulation throughout the country, as well as in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, by a repeal of the act which permits country banks to issue one and two pound notes until the year 1833; and by the immediate enactment of a prohibition of any such issues at the expiration of two or three years from the present period.

It appears to us to be quite clear, that such a measure would be productive of much good; that it would operate as some check upon the spirit of speculation, and upon the issues of country banks; and whilst, on the one hand, it would diminish the pressure upon the Bank and the metropolis, incident to an unfavourable state of the exchanges, by spreading it over a wider surface; on the other hand, it would cause such pressure to be earlier felt, and thereby ensure an earlier and more general adoption of precautionary measures necessary for counteracting the inconveniences incident to an export of the precious metals. But though a recurrence to a gold circulation in the country, for the reasons already stated, might be productive of some good, it would by no means go to the root of the evil.

We have abundant proof of the truth of this position, in the events which took place in the spring of 1793, when a convulsion occurred in the money transactions and circulation of the country more extensive than that which we have recently experienced. At that period nearly a hundred country banks were obliged to stop payment, and Parliament was induced to grant an issue of Exchequer-bills to relieve the distress. Yet, in the year 1793, there were no one or two pound notes in circulation in England, either by country banks or by the Bank of England.

We have a further proof of the truth of what has been advanced, in the experience of Scotland, which has escaped all the convulsions which have occurred in the money-market of England for the last thirty-five years, though Scotland during the whole of that time has had a circulation of one-pound notes; and the small pecuniary transactions of that part of the United Kingdom have been carried on exclusively by the means of such notes.

The issue of small notes, though it be an aggravation, cannot therefore be the sole or even the main cause of the evil in England.

The failures which have occurred in England, unaccompanied as they have been by the same occurrences in Scotland, tend to prove that there must have been an unsolid and delusive system of banking in one part of Great Britain, and a solid and substantial one in the other.

It would be entirely at variance with our deliberate opinion, not to do full justice to the Bank of England, as the great centre of circulation and commercial credit.

We believe that much of the prosperity of the country for the last century is to be ascribed to the general wisdom, justice, and fairness of the dealings of the Bank; and we further think, that during a great part of that time, it may have been, in itself and by itself, fully equal to all the important duties and operations confided to it. But the progress of the country during the last thirty or forty years, in every branch of industry, in agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and navigation, has been so rapid and extensive, as to make it no reflection upon the Bank of England to say, that the instrument, which, by itself, was fully adequate to former transactions, is no longer sufficient without new aids to meet the demands of the present times.

We have to a considerable degree, the proof of this position, in the very establishment of so many country banks.

Within the memory of many living, and even of some of those now engaged in public affairs, there were no country banks, except in a few of the great commercial towns.

The money transactions of the country were carried on by supplies of coin and Bank notes from London.

The extent of the business of the country, and the improvement made from time to time in the mode of conducting our increased commercial transactions, founded on pecuniary credit, rendered such a system no longer adequate, and country banks must have arisen, as in fact they did arise, from the increased wealth and new wants of the country.

The matter of regret is, not that country banks have been suffered to exist, but that they have been suffered so long to exist without control or limitation, or without the adoption of provisions calculated to counteract the evils resulting from their improvidence or excess.

It would be vain to suppose, that we could now, by any act of the legislature, extinguish the existing country banks, even if it were desirable; but it may be within our power, gradually at least, to establish a sound system of banking throughout the country; and if such a system can be formed, there can be little doubt that it would ultimately extinguish and absorb all that is objectionable and dangerous in the present banking establishments.

There appear to be two modes of attaining this object:

First, That the Bank of England should establish branches of its own body in different parts of the country.

Secondly, That the Bank of England should give up its exclusive privilege as to the number of partners engaged in banking, except within a certain distance from the metropolis.

It has always appeared to us, that it would have been very desirable that the Bank should have tried the first of these plans—that of establishing branch banks, upon a limited scale. But we are not insensible to the difficulties which would have attended such an experiment, and we are quite satisfied that it would be impossible for the Bank, under present circumstances, to carry into execution such a system, to the extent necessary for providing for the wants of the country.

There remains, therefore, only the other plan—the surrender by the Bank of their exclusive privilege, as to the number of partners, beyond a certain distance from the metropolis.

The effect of such a measure would be, the gradual establishment of extensive and respectable banks in different parts of the country; some perhaps with charters from the Crown, under certain qualifications, and some without.

Here we have again the advantage of the experience of Scotland.

In England there are said to be between 800 and 900 country banks; and it is no exaggeration to suppose that a great proportion of them have not been conducted with a due attention to those precautions which are necessary for the safety of all banking establishments, even where their property is most ample. When such banks stop, their creditors may ultimately be paid the whole of their demands, but the delay and shock to credit may, in the mean time, involve them in the same difficulty, and is always attended with the greatest injury and suffering in the districts where such stoppages occur. If this be the case where the solidity of the bank is unquestionable, what must it be when (as too often happens) they rest on no solid foundation.

In Scotland there are not more than thirty banks; and these banks have stood firm amidst all the convulsions in the money-market in England, and amidst all the distresses to which the manufacturing and agricultural interests in Scotland, as well as in England, have occasionally been subject.

Banks of this description must necessarily be conducted upon the general understood and approved principles of banking.

Individuals are, from the nature of the institutions, precluded from speculating in the manner in which persons engaged in country, and even in London banks, speculate in England.

If the concerns of the country could be carried on without any other bank than the Bank of England, there might be some reason for not interfering with their exclusive privilege; but the effect of the law at present is, to permit every description of banking, except that which is solid and secure.

Let the Bank of England reflect on the dangers to which it has been recently subject, and let its directors and proprietors then say, whether, for their own interests, such an improvement as is suggested in the banking system is not desirable, and even necessary.

The Bank of England may perhaps propose, as they did upon a former occasion, the extension of the term of their exclusive privilege, as to the metropolis and its neighbourhood, beyond the year 1833, as the price of this concession.

It would be very much to be regretted that they should require any such condition.

It is clear that in point of security they would gain by the concession proposed to them, inasmuch as their own safety is now necessarily endangered by all such convulsions in the country circulation as we have lately and formerly witnessed.

In point of profit, would they lose any thing by it, for which they are entitled to demand compensation.

It is notorious, that at the present time their notes circulate in no part of England beyond the metropolis and its neighbourhood, except in Lancashire; and perhaps for that district some special provision might be made.

But as it is the interest, so it has been and ever will be the endeavour, of the country bankers to keep the Bank of England notes out of circulation in those parts of the kingdom where their own circulation prevails. In this they must always be successful, whilst public credit continues in its ordinary state, and the exchanges not unfavourable to this country. The consequences are, that in such times the Bank of England becomes in a manner the sole depository for gold; and in times of an opposite tendency, the sole resort for obtaining it; that at one period their legitimate profit is curtailed by an accumulation of treasure beyond what would be required by a due attention to their own private safety as a banking establishment; and at another period they are exposed to demands which endanger that safety, and baffle all the ordinary calculations of foresight and prudence.

If, then, the Bank of England has no country circulation, except in the county above named, the only question for them to consider is, whether, on the ground of profit, as well as security to themselves, the existing country circulation shall or shall not be improved.

With respect to the extension of the term of their exclusive privileges in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, it is obvious, from what passed before, that parliament will never agree to it.

Such privileges are out of fashion; and what expectation can the Bank, under present circumstances, entertain that theirs will be renewed? But there is no reason why the Bank of England should look at this consequence with dismay. They will remain a chartered corporation for carrying on the business of banking. In that character they will, we trust, always continue to be the sole bankers of the state, and with these advantages, so long as they conduct their affairs wisely and prudently, they always must be the great centre of banking and circulation.

Theirs is the only establishment at which the dividend due to the public creditor can by law be paid.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Bank will make no difficulty in giving up their exclusive privileges, in respect to the number of partners engaged in banking, as to any district——miles from the metropolis.

Should the Bank be disposed to consent to a measure of this nature in time to enable the government to announce such a concession at the opening of parliament, it would afford great facilities to the arrangement which they may have to propose for ensuring the stability of private credit, in which the support of public credit and the maintenance of public prosperity are so materially and closely involved.

No. II.—At a Court of Directors at the Bank, January 20:

This court having taken into consideration the important paper received from the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer, have resolved—

That however essentially they may differ on certain views and sentiments therein laid down and expressed, it is not for the court at the present moment to offer any opinions of their own, the paper appearing to be intended as declaratory of the grounds on which his majesty's ministers have come to the determination to require the Bank to give up its exclusive privilege as to the number of partners engaged in banking, except within a certain distance from the metropolis.

It cannot, however, be considered inconsistent with this forbearance, to state the apprehensions of the court of Directors, that confidence is not so fully restored as lord Liverpool and the chancellor of the Exchequer seem to imagine.

Though the panic has subsided, credit, both public and private, remains in a very uncertain and anxious state.

That the country circulation is in many parts extremely defective, cannot be controverted; and the Bank would very reluctantly oppose itself to any measures tending to ameliorate it, but would be glad to promote that object, either by fresh exertions on their part, should such be found practicable, or by any reasonable sacrifice.

Under the uncertainty in which the court of Directors find themselves with respect to the details of the plans of government, and the effect which they may have on the interests of the Bank, this court cannot feel themselves justified in recommending to their proprietors to give up the privilege which they now enjoy, sanctioned and confirmed as it is by the solemn acts of the legislature.

No. III.—The first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer have duly considered the answer of the Bank of the 20th inst.

They cannot but regret that the court of Directors should have declined to recommend to the court of Proprietors the consideration of the paper delivered by the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer to the governor and deputy governor of the Bank on the 13th instant.

The statement contained in that paper appears to the first lord of the Treasury and chancellor of the Exchequer so full and explicit on all the points to which it relates, that they have nothing further to add, although they would have been, as they still are, ready to answer, as far as possible, any specific questions which might be put, for the purpose of "removing the uncertainty in which the court of Directors state themselves to be with respect to the details of the plan suggested in that paper."

After all, the simple question for the Bank to consider is, whether they are willing to relinquish their exclusive privilege as to the number of partners engaged in banking at a certain distance from the metropolis?

The first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer are satisfied that the

profits of the Bank would in no degree be affected by their consenting to such a proposal.

Convinced of this, and that its adoption by the Bank is as important to their own security as to that of the public, it does not appear that the Bank can be equitably entitled to claim any compensation for the surrender of this privilege of their charter.

Against any proposition for such compensation the first lord of the Treasury and chancellor of the Exchequer formally protest; but if the Bank should be of opinion that this concession should be accompanied with other conditions, and that it ought not to be made without them, it is for the Bank to bring forward such conditions.

Fife-house, Jan. 23.

No. IV.—At a Court of Directors at the Bank, January 26;

The governor laid before the court the following minute of the committee of Treasury, viz.—

Committee of Treasury, Jan. 25.

The committee of Treasury having taken into consideration the paper received from the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer, dated January 23, 1826, and finding that his majesty's ministers persevere in their desire to propose to restrict immediately the exclusive privilege of the Bank, as to the number of partners engaged in banking, to a certain distance from the metropolis, and also continue to be of opinion, that parliament would not consent to renew the privilege at the expiration of the period of their present charter; finding, also, that the proposal by the Bank, of establishing branch banks, is deemed by his majesty's ministers inadequate to the wants of the country, are of opinion, that it would be desirable for this corporation to propose, as a basis, the act of the 6th Geo. IV. c. 42, which states the conditions on which the Bank of Ireland relinquished its exclusive privilege; this corporation waving the question of a prolongation of time, although the committee cannot agree in the opinion of the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer, that they are not making a considerable sacrifice, adverting especially to the Bank of Ireland remaining in possession of that privilege five years longer than the Bank of England.

The act above alluded to contains the following clauses, sections 4 and 18. [See the annexed paper, marked A.]

(A)—"Provided always, and be it further enacted, that nothing in this act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to enable or authorize any such society or copartnership, either by any member or members thereof, or by their agent, or any other person on behalf of such society or copartnership, to pay, issue, or re-issue, at Dublin, or within 50 miles thereof, any bill or note of such society or copartnership, which shall be payable to bearer on demand, or any Bank post-bill, nor to draw upon any partner or agent who may be resident in Dublin, or within 50 miles thereof, any bill of exchange which shall be payable on demand, or which shall be for less amount than 50*l.*, nor to borrow, owe, or take up in England, or in Dublin, or within 50 miles thereof, any sum or sums of money, or any promissory note, or bill of any such society or copartnership, payable on demand, or at any less time than six months from the borrowing thereof, or to make or issue any bill or bills of exchange, or promissory note or notes of such society or copartnership, contrary to the provisions of the said recited acts of the 21st and 22nd years of king George the 3rd, or of the 1st and 2nd of his present majesty, save as provided by this act in that behalf.

"And be it further enacted, that execution upon any judgment in any action obtained against any public officer, for the time being, of any such society or copartnership, whether as plaintiff or defendant, may be issued against any member or members, for the time being, of such society or copartnership, and that in case any such execution against any member or members, for the time being, of such society or copartnership, shall be ineffectual for obtaining payment and satisfaction of the amount of such judgment, it shall be lawful for the party or parties so having obtained judgment against such public officer for the time being, to issue execution against any person or persons who was or were a member or members of such society or copartnership, at the time when the contract or contracts, or engagement or engagements, on which such judgment may have been obtained, was or were entered into. Provided always, that no such execution as last mentioned shall be issued without leave first granted on motion in open court, by the court in which such judgment shall have been obtained, and which motion shall be made on notice to the person or persons sought to be charged; nor after the expiration of three years next after any such person or persons shall have ceased to be a member or members of such society or copartnership."

Resolved,—That the foregoing recommendation of the committee of Treasury be agreed to; and that the governor and deputy governor be requested to lay it before the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer.

No. V.—The first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer have taken into consideration the paper delivered to them by the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, on the 27th instant.

They think it right to lose no time in expressing their concurrence in the proposition which has been sanctioned by the court of Directors, as to the exclusive privilege of the Bank of England, and are willing to agree that, the two clauses inserted in the Irish act last year, and referred to in the paper communi-

cated by the governor and deputy governor on the 27th instant, shall be inserted in the bill, which will be necessary to give effect to the new arrangement.

The first lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer cannot conclude without adverting to that part of the paper of the Bank which respects branches of the Bank of England. In their paper of the 13th of January, the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer have stated the reasons why they are of opinion that, under all the present circumstances, the establishment of branches of the Bank of England would not of itself be sufficient to meet all the exigencies of the country; but they are so far from wishing to discourage the establishment of such branches, that they are decidedly of opinion, that the formation of them, under proper regulations, would be highly advantageous both to the Bank and to the community.

Fife-house, January 28th.

No. VI.—At a general Court of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, Friday, February 3rd:

Resolved,—That this court do consent to the terms proposed to the Bank, in the papers now read, and do request the court of Directors to carry the arrangement into effect.

TREATY OF AMITY, COMMERCE, AND NAVIGATION WITH THE STATE OF COLOMBIA.] The following Treaty was laid on the table by the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

TREATY of AMITY, COMMERCE, and NAVIGATION, between his Majesty and the State of Colombia, together with an additional article thereunto annexed, Signed at Bogota, April 18, 1825.

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity—Extensive commercial intercourse having been established for a series of years between the dominions of his Britannic majesty, and the several provinces or countries of America, which (now united) constitute the State of Colombia, it seems good for the security as well as encouragement of such commercial intercourse, and, for the maintenance of good understanding between his said Britannic majesty and the said state, that the relations now subsisting between them should be regularly acknowledged and confirmed by the signature of a treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation. For this purpose they have named their respective plenipotentiaries, that is to say,—His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, John Potter Hamilton, esq.; and Patrick Campbell, esq.;—and the Vice-president, charged with the executive power of the State of Colombia, Pedro Gual, secretary of state in the department for foreign affairs, and general Pedro Briceno Mendez;—who, after having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found to be in due and proper form, have agreed upon and concluded the following articles:—

Art. 1.—There shall be perpetual, firm, and sincere amity between the dominions and subjects of his majesty the king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, his heirs, and successors, and the State and people of Colombia.

Art. 2.—There shall be, between all the territories of his Britannic majesty in Europe, and the territories of Colombia, a reciprocal freedom of commerce. The subjects and citizens of the two countries, respectively, shall have liberty freely and securely to come, with their ships and cargoes, to all such places ports, and rivers, in the territories aforesaid, to which other foreigners are or may be permitted to come, to enter into the same, and to remain and reside in any part of the said territories, respectively; also to hire and occupy houses and warehouses for the purposes of their commerce; and, generally, the merchants and traders of each nation, respectively, shall enjoy the most complete protection and security for their commerce; subject always to the laws and statutes of the two countries, respectively.

Art. 3.—His majesty the king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland engages further that the citizens of Colombia shall have the like liberty of commerce and navigation stipulated for in the preceding article, in all his dominions situated out of Europe, to the full extent in which the same is permitted at present, or shall be permitted hereafter, to any other nation.

Art. 4.—No higher or other duties shall be imposed on the importation into the territories of his Britannic majesty, of any articles of the growth, produce, or manufacture of Colombia, —and no higher or other duties shall be imposed on the importation into the territories of Colombia, of any articles of the growth, produce, or manufacture of his Britannic majesty's dominions, than are or shall be payable on the like articles, being the growth, produce, or manufacture of any other foreign country; nor shall any other or higher duties or charges be imposed in the territories or dominions of either of the contracting parties, on the exportation of any articles to the territories or dominions of the other, than such as are or may be payable on the exportation of the like articles to any other foreign country; nor shall any prohibition be imposed upon the exportation or importation of any articles the growth, produce, or manufacture of his Britannic majesty's dominions, or of the said territories of Colombia, to or from the said dominions of his Britannic majesty, or to or from the said territories of Colombia, which shall not equally extend to all other nations.

Art. 5.—No higher or other duties or charges on account of tonnage, light, or harbour dues, pilotage, salvage in case of damage or shipwreck, or any other local charges, shall be im-

posed, in any of the ports of Colombia, on British vessels, than those payable in the same ports by Colombian vessels; nor in the ports of his Britannic majesty's territories, on Colombian vessels, than shall be payable in the same ports on British vessels.

Art. 6.—The same duties shall be paid on the importation into the territories of Colombia of any article the growth, produce, or manufacture of his Britannic majesty's dominions, whether such importation shall be in Colombian or in British vessels; and the same duties shall be paid on the importation into the dominions of his Britannic majesty of any article of the growth, produce, or manufacture of Colombia, whether such importation shall be in British or Colombian vessels. The same duties shall be paid, and the same drawbacks and bounties allowed, on the exportation to Colombia of any articles of the growth, produce, or manufacture of his Britannic majesty's dominions, whether such exportation shall be in Colombian or in British vessels; and the same duties shall be paid, and the same bounties and drawbacks allowed, on the exportation of any articles the growth, produce, or manufacture of Colombia to his Britannic majesty's dominions, whether such exportation shall be in British or Colombian vessels.

Art. 7.—In order to avoid any misunderstanding with respect to the regulations which may respectively constitute a British or a Colombian vessel, it is hereby agreed, that all vessels built in the dominions of his Britannic majesty, and owned by British subjects, or by any of them, and whereof the master and three-fourths of the mariners, at least, are British subjects, excepting where the laws provide for any extreme cases, shall be considered as British vessels; and that all vessels built in the territories of Colombia, and owned by the citizens thereof, or any of them, and whereof the master and three fourths of the mariners, at least, are Colombian citizens, excepting where the laws provide for any extreme cases, shall be considered as Colombian vessels.

Art. 8. — All merchants, commanders of ships, and others, the subjects of his Britannic majesty, or citizens of the state of Colombia, shall have full liberty, in all the territories of both powers, respectively, to manage their own affairs themselves, or to commit them to the management of whomsoever they please, as broker, factor, agent, or interpreter; nor shall they be obliged to employ any other persons for those purposes, nor to pay them any salary or remuneration unless they shall choose to employ them; and absolute freedom shall be allowed, in all cases, to the buyer and seller, to bargain and fix the price of any goods, wares, or merchandise imported into, or exported from, the territories of either of the contracting parties, as they shall see good.

Art. 9.—In whatever relates to the lading, and unlading of ships, the safety of merchandize, goods, and effects, the succession to personal estates, and the disposal of personal property of every sort and denomination, by sale, donation, exchange, or testament, or in any other manner whatsoever, as also the administration of justice, the subjects and citizens of the two contracting parties shall enjoy, in their respective dominions and territories, the same privileges, liberties, and rights, as the most favoured nation, and shall not be charged, in any of these respects, with any higher imposts or duties than those which are paid, or may be paid, by the native subjects or citizens of the power in whose dominions or territories they may be resident.

They shall be exempted from all compulsory military service whatsoever, whether by sea or land, and from all forced loans, or military exactions and requisitions; neither shall they be compelled to pay any ordinary taxes, under any pretext whatsoever, greater than those that are paid by the subjects or citizens of one or other power.

Art. 10.—It shall be free for each of the two contracting parties to appoint consuls for the protection of trade, to reside in the dominions and territories of the other party; but before any consul shall act as such, he shall, in the usual form, be approved and admitted by the government to which he is sent; and either of the contracting parties may except from the residence of consuls, such particular places as either of them may judge fit to be so excepted.

Art. 11.—For the better security of commerce between the subjects of his Britannic majesty and the citizens of Colombia, it is agreed, that if at any time any interruption of friendly commercial intercourse, or any rupture should unfortunately take place between the two contracting parties, the subjects or citizens of either of the two contracting parties, residing in the dominions of the other, shall have the privilege of remaining and continuing their trade therein, without any manner of interruption, so long as they behave peaceably, and commit no offence against the laws; and their effects and property, whether intrusted to individuals or to the state, shall not be liable to seizure or sequestration, or to any other demands than those which may be made upon the like effects or property belonging to the native inhabitants of the state in which such subjects or citizens may reside.

Art. 12.—The subjects of his Britannic majesty residing in the territories of the state of Colombia shall enjoy the most perfect and entire security of conscience, without being annoyed, prevented, or disturbed on account of their religious belief. Neither shall they be annoyed, molested, or disturbed in the proper exercise of their religion, provided that this take place in private houses, and with the decorum due to divine worship, with due respect to the laws, usages, and customs of the country. Liberty shall also be granted to bury the subjects of his Britannic majesty, who may die in the said territories of Colombia, in convenient and adequate places, to be appointed and es-

tablished by themselves for that purpose, with the knowleege of the local authorities. Nor shall the funerals or sepulchres of the dead be disturbed in any wise, nor upon any account. In the like manner the citizens of Colombia shall enjoy within all the dominions of his Britannic majesty, a perfect and unrestrained liberty of conscience, and of exercising their religion publicly or privately, within their own dwelling houses, or in the chapels and places of worship appointed for that purpose, agreeably to the system of toleration established in the dominions of his said majesty.

Art. 13.—The government of Colombia engages to co-operate with his Britannic majesty for the total abolition of the slave trade, and to prohibit all persons inhabiting within the territories of Colombia, in the most effectual manner, from taking any share in such trade.

Art. 14.—And forasmuch as it would be convenient and useful, for the purpose of facilitating the mutual good understanding between the two contracting parties, and for avoiding all difficulties henceforward, that other articles should be proposed and added to the present treaty, which articles, both from a want of due time for their consideration, as well as from the pressure of circumstances, cannot at present be drawn up with the required perfection, it has been and is agreed, on the part of both powers, that they will, with the least possible delay, come forward to treat and agree upon such articles as may be wanting to this treaty, and deemed mutually beneficial; and which articles, when they shall be agreed upon, and shall be duly ratified, shall form part of the present treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation.

Art. 15.—The present treaty shall be ratified by his majesty the king of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and by the president or vice-president charged with the executive power of the state of Colombia, with the consent and approbation of the Congress of the said state; and the ratifications shall be exchanged at London within the space of six months, or sooner if possible.

In witness whereof, the respective plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms. Done in the city of Bogota, the 18th day of April, in the year of our Lord 1825.

(L. S.) JOHN POTTER HAMILTON.
(L. S.) PATRICK CAMPBELL.
(L. S.) PEDRO GAUL.
(L. S.) PEDRO BRICENO MENDEZ.

Additional Article.—Whereas, in the present state of Colombian shipping, it would not be possible for Colombia to take advantage of the reciprocity established by the articles, 5, 6, and 7, of the treaty signed this day, if that part should be carried into immediate effect which stipulates that in order to be considered as a Colombian ship, a ship shall actually have been built in Colombia, it is agreed that, for the space of seven years, to be reckoned from the date of the ratification of this treaty, any ships, wheresoever built, being bonâ fide the property of any of the citizens of Colombia, and whereof the master and three fourths of the mariners, at least, are also Colombian citizens, excepting where the laws provide for any extreme cases, shall be considered as Colombian ships:—His majesty, the king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, reserving to himself the right at the end of the said term of seven years, to claim the principle of reciprocal restriction, stipulated for in Article 7, above referred to, if the interests of British navigation shall be found to be prejudiced by the present exception to that reciprocity, in favour of Colombian shipping.

The present additional article shall have the same force and validity as if it were inserted, word for word in the treaty signed this day. It shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged at the same time.

In witness whereof, the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms. Done in the city of Bogota, the 18th day of April, in the year of our Lord 1825.

(L. S.) JOHN POTTER HAMILTON.
(L. S.) PATRICK CAMPBELL.
(L. S.) PEDRO GUAL.
(L. S.) PEDRO BRICENO MENDEZ.

Declaration by His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on the Exchange of Ratifications.

The undersigned, His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at the moment of exchanging with Senor Manuel Jose Hurtado, Plenipotentiary of the State of Colombia, the ratifications of the treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, signed at Bogota, on the 18th of April, 1825, by John Potter Hamilton, esq., and Patrick Campbell, esq., on the part of his majesty, and Senor Pedro Gual, and general Pedro Briceno Mendez, on the part of the State of Colombia, has been commanded by his majesty, in order to avoid any misunderstanding which might possibly arise in the execution of that part of the seventh article of the said treaty, wherein it is defined what ships shall be considered as entitled to the privileges of British and Colombian ships to declare to Senor Hurtado, that, in addition to the qualifications therein expressed, such other ships will likewise be entitled to be considered as British ships, which shall have been captured from an enemy by his majesty's ships of war, or by subjects of his majesty furnished with letters of marque by the lords commissioners of the Admiralty, and regularly condemned in one of his majesty's Prize Courts as a lawful prize, or which shall have been condemned in any competent court, for the breach of the laws made for the prevention of the slave trade; and that, in the same manner, ships captured from the enemy by the ships of Colombia, and condemned under similar circumstances, will likewise

be entitled to be considered as Colombian ships. GEORGE CANNING.

London, Nov. 7, 1825.

Senor Manuel Jose Hurtado, &c. &c. &c.

Act of Acceptance of the above Declaration, by the Colombian Plenipotentiary.

The undersigned, Plenipotentiary of the State of Colombia, having received from his Britannic majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a declaration, stating, "That in order to avoid any misunderstanding which might possibly arise in the execution of that part of the seventh article of the treaty between his Britannic majesty and the State of Colombia, signed at Bogota, on the 18th of April, 1825, wherein it is defined what ships shall be considered as entitled to the privileges of British and Colombian ships, in addition to the qualifications therein expressed, such other ships will likewise be entitled to be considered as British ships, which shall have been captured from an enemy by his Britannic majesty's ships of war, or by subjects of his said majesty furnished with letters of marque by the lords commissioners of the Admiralty, and regularly condemned in one of his said majesty's Prize Courts as a lawful prize, or which shall have been condemned in any competent court, for the breach of the laws made for the prevention of the slave trade: and that, in the same manner, ships captured from the enemy by the ships of Colombia, and condemned under similar circumstances, will likewise be entitled to be considered as Colombian ships."

The undersigned, in virtue of the full powers with which he is invested, hereby accepts and adopts the said declaration, in the name and on the behalf of his government.

MANUEL JOSE HURTADO.

London, Nov. 7, 1825.

The Right Hon. George Canning, &c. &c. &c.

CONVENTION OF COMMERCE WITH THE HANSEATIC REPUBLICS.] The following Convention was laid on the table:—

CONVENTION OF COMMERCE between His Majesty and the free Hanseatic Republics of Lubeck, Bremen, and Hamburgh, signed at London, Sept. 29, 1825.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on the one part, and the Senate of the free Hanseatic city of Lubeck, the Senate of the free Hanseatic city of Bremen, and the Senate of the free Hanseatic city of Hamburgh (each State for itself separately) on the other part, being equally desirous of affording every facility and encouragement to their subjects and citizens engaged in commercial intercourse with each other, and being of opinion that nothing will more contribute to the attainment of this desirable object than a reciprocal abrogation of all discriminating and countervailing duties levied upon the ships of the high contracting parties, or upon the cargoes of such ships, in the ports of either, have appointed their plenipotentiaries to conclude a convention for that purpose, that is to say:—

His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, the Right Hon. George Canning, a Member of His Majesty's Most Hon. Privy Council, a Member of Parliament, and His said Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and the Right Hon. William Huskisson, a Member of His said Majesty's Most Hon. Privy Council, a Member of Parliament, President of the Committee of Privy Council for Affairs of Trade and Foreign Plantations, and Treasurer of His said Majesty's Navy:—

And the Senate of the free Hanseatic city of Lubeck, the Senate of the free Hanseatic city of Bremen, and the Senate of the Free Hanseatic city of Hamburgh, James Colquhoun, Esq. their Agent and Consul-General in Great Britain:—

Who, after having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found to be in due and proper form, have agreed upon and concluded the following articles:

Art. 1. From and after the date hereof, British vessels entering or departing from the ports of the Free Hanseatic Republics of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, and Lubeck, Bremen or Hamburgh vessels entering or departing from the ports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, shall not be subject to any other or higher ship duties or charges than are or shall be levied on national vessels entering or departing from such ports respectively.

Art. 2.—All goods, wares, and merchandise, whether the production of the territories of the free Hanseatic republics of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, or of any other country, which may be legally imported from any of the ports of the said republics into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in British vessels, shall, in like manner, be permitted to be imported in Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh vessels: and all goods, wares, and merchandise, whether the production of any of the dominions of his Britannic majesty, or of any other country, which may be legally exported from the ports of the United Kingdom in British vessels, shall, in like manner, be permitted to be exported from the said ports in Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh vessels. And all goods, wares, and merchandise, which may be legally imported into or exported from the ports of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, in national vessels, shall, in like manner, be permitted to be imported into or exported from the ports of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, in British vessels.

Art. 3.—All goods, wares, and merchandise, which can be legally imported into the ports of the United Kingdom directly from the ports of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, or either of them, shall be admitted at the same rate of

duty, whether imported in British vessels, or in vessels belonging to either of the said republics:—and all goods, wares, and merchandise, which can be legally exported from the United Kingdom, shall be entitled to the same bounties, drawbacks, and allowances, whether exported in British or Hanseatic vessels. And the like reciprocity shall be observed, in the ports of the said republics, in respect to all goods, wares, and merchandise which can be legally imported into or exported from any or either of the said ports, in vessels belonging to the United Kingdom.

Art. 4.—No priority or preference shall be given, directly or indirectly, by any or either of the contracting parties, nor by any company, corporation, or agent, acting on their behalf, or under their authority, in the purchase of any article, the growth, produce, or manufacture of their states, respectively, imported into the other, on account of or in reference to the character of the vessel in which such article was imported; it being the true intent and meaning of the high contracting parties, that no distinction or difference whatever shall be made in this respect.

Art. 5.—In consideration of the limited extent of the territories belonging to the republics of Lubeck, Bremen, and Hamburgh, and the intimate connexion of trade and navigation subsisting between these republics, it is hereby stipulated and agreed, that any vessels which have been built in any or either of the ports of the said republics, and which shall be owned exclusively by a citizen or citizens of any or either of them, and of which the master shall also be a citizen of either of them, and provided three fourths of the crew shall be subjects or citizens of any or either of the said republics, or of any or either of the states comprised in the Germanic Confederation, as described and enumerated in the 53rd and 56th articles of the general treaty of Congress, signed at Vienna on the 9th of June, 1815, such vessel, so built, owned, and navigated, shall, for all the purposes of this convention, be taken to be and considered as a vessel belonging to Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh.

Art. 6.—Any vessel, together with her cargo, belonging to either of the three free Hanseatic republics of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, and coming from either of the said ports to the United Kingdom, shall, for all the purposes of this convention, be deemed to come from the country to which such vessel belongs; and any British vessel and her cargo trading to the ports of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, directly or in succession, shall, for the like purposes, be on the footing of a Hanseatic vessel and her cargo making the same voyage.

Art. 7.—It is further mutually agreed, that no higher or other duties shall be levied, in any or either of the states of the high contracting parties, upon any personal property of the subjects and citizens of each, respectively, on the removal of the same from the dominions or territory of such states (either upon inheritance of such property or otherwise), than are or shall be payable, in each state, upon the like property, when removed by a subject or citizen of such state, respectively.

Art. 8.—The high contracting parties reserve to enter upon additional stipulations for the purpose of facilitating and extending, even beyond what is comprehended in the convention of this date, the commercial relations of their respective subjects and dominions, citizens, and territories, upon the principle either of reciprocal or equivalent advantages, as the case may be; and in the event of any article or articles being concluded between the said high contracting parties, for giving effect to such stipulations, it is hereby agreed that the article or articles which may hereafter be so concluded, shall be considered as forming part of the present convention.

Art. 9.—The present convention shall be in force for the term of ten years from the date hereof; and further, until the end of twelve months after the king of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, on the one part, or the governments of the free Hanseatic republics of Lubeck, Bremen, or Hamburgh, or either of them, on the other part, shall have given notice of their intention to terminate the same; each of the said high contracting parties reserving to itself the right of giving such notice to the other, at the end of the said term of ten years: and it is hereby agreed between them, that at the expiration of twelve months after such notice shall have been received by either of the parties from the other, this convention, and all the provisions thereof, shall altogether cease and determine, as far as regards the states giving and receiving such notice; it being always understood and agreed, that if one or more of the Hanseatic republics aforesaid shall, at the expiration of ten years from the date hereof, give or receive notice of the proposed termination of this convention, such convention shall nevertheless remain in full force and operation, as far as regards the remaining Hanseatic republics or republic which may not have given or received such notice.

Art. 10.—The present convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged at London within one month from the date hereof, or sooner if possible.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms. Done at London the 29th day of September, in the year of our Lord 1825.

(L.S.)	George Canning.
(L.S.)	W. Huskisson.
(L.S.)	James Colquhoun.

Convention of Commerce with France.] The following Convention was laid on the table:—

Convention of Commerce between his Majesty and the Most Christian King, together

with two Additional Articles thereunto annexed. Signed at London, January 26th, 1826.

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity.—His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on the one part, and His Majesty the King of France and Navarre on the other part, being equally animated by the desire of facilitating the commercial intercourse between their respective subjects, and being persuaded that nothing can more contribute to the fulfilment of their mutual wishes in this respect, than to simplify and equalize the regulations which are now in force relative to the navigation of both kingdoms, by the reciprocal abrogation of all discriminating duties levied upon the vessels of either of the two nations in the ports of the other, whether under the head of duties of tonnage, harbours, light-house, pilotage, and others of the same description; or in the shape of increased duties upon goods on account of their being imported or exported in other than national vessels; have named as their plenipotentiaries to conclude a convention for this purpose—that is to say:—

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Right Hon. George Canning, a Member of his said Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, a Member of Parliament, and his said Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the Right Hon. William Huskisson, a Member of His said Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, a Member of Parliament, President of the Committee of Privy Council for Affairs of Trade and Foreign Plantations, and Treasurer of His said Majesty's Navy:

And His Majesty the King of France and Navarre, the Prince Jules, Count de Polignac, a Peer of France, Marechal de-Camp of His Most Christian Majesty's Forces, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, Officer of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honour, Grand Cross of the Order of St. Maurice of Sardinia, Aide-de-Camp of His Most Christian Majesty, and his Ambassador at the Court of His Britannic Majesty:

Who, after having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found to be in due and proper form, have agreed upon and concluded the following articles:—

Art. 1.—From and after the fifth of April of the present year, French vessels, coming from or departing for the ports of France, or, if in ballast, coming from or departing for any place, shall not be subject, in the ports of the United Kingdom, either on entering into or departing from the same, to any higher duties of tonnage, harbour, light-house, pilotage, quarantine, or other similar or corresponding duties, of whatever nature, or under whatever denomination, than those to which British vessels, in respect of the same voyages, are or may be subject, on entering into or departing from such ports; and, reciprocally, from and after the same period, British vessels coming from or departing for the ports of the United Kingdom, or if in ballast, coming from or departing for any place, shall not be subject, in the ports of France, either on entering into or departing from the same, to any higher duties of tonnage, harbour, light-house, pilotage, quarantine, or other similar or corresponding duties, of whatever nature, or under whatever denominations, than those to which French vessels, in respect to the same voyages, are or may be subject on entering into or departing from such ports; whether such duties are collected separately, or are consolidated in one and the same duty; his most Christian Majesty reserving to himself to regulate the amount of such duty or duties in France, according to the rate at which they are or may be established in the United Kingdom: at the same time, with the view of diminishing the burdens imposed upon the navigation of the two countries, his most Christian Majesty will always be disposed to reduce the amount of the said burdens in France, in proportion to any reduction which may hereafter be made of those now levied in the ports of the United Kingdom.

Art. 2.—Goods, wares, and merchandise, which can or may be legally imported into the ports of the United Kingdom from the ports of France, if so imported in French vessels, shall be subject to no higher duties than if imported in British vessels, and, reciprocally, goods, wares, and merchandise, which can or may be legally imported into the ports of France, from the ports of the United Kingdom, if so imported in British vessels, shall be subject to no higher duties than if imported in French vessels. The produce of Asia, Africa, and America, not being allowed to be imported from the said countries nor from any other, in French vessels, nor from France in French, British, or any other vessels, into the ports of the United Kingdom, for home consumption, but only for warehousing and re-exportation, his most Christian Majesty reserves to himself to direct that, in like manner, the produce of Asia, Africa, and America, shall not be imported from the said countries, nor from any other, in British vessels, nor from the United Kingdom in British, French, or any other vessels, into the ports of France, for the consumption of that kingdom, but only for warehousing and re-exportation.

With regard to the productions of the countries of Europe, it is understood between the high contracting parties, that such productions shall not be imported in British ships into France for the consumption of that kingdom, unless such ships shall have been laden therewith in some port of the United Kingdom; and that his Britannic Majesty may adopt, if he shall think fit, some corresponding restrictive measure, with regard to the productions of the countries of Europe imported into the ports of the United Kingdom in French vessels: the high contracting parties reserving, however, to themselves the power of making,

by mutual consent, such relaxations in the strict execution of the present article as they may think useful to the respective interests of the two countries, upon the principle of mutual concessions, affording each to the other reciprocal or equivalent advantages.

Art. 3.—All goods, wares, and merchandise, which can or may be legally exported from the ports of either of the two countries, shall, on their export, pay the same duties of exportation, whether the exportation of such goods, wares, and merchandise, be made in British or in French vessels, provided the said vessels proceed, respectively, direct from the ports of the one country to those of the other. And all the said goods, wares, and merchandise, so exported in British or French vessels, shall be reciprocally entitled to the same bounties, drawbacks, and other allowances of the same nature, which are granted by the regulations of each country respectively.

Art. 4.—It is mutually agreed between the high contracting parties, that in the intercourse of navigation between their two countries, the vessels of any third power shall, in no case, obtain more favourable conditions than those stipulated in the present convention in favour of British and French vessels.

Art. 5.—The fishing-boats of either of the two countries, which may be forced by stress of weather to seek shelter in the ports or on the coast of the other country, shall not be subject to any duties or port charges of any description whatsoever; provided the said boats, when so driven in by stress of weather, shall not discharge or receive on board any cargo, or portion of cargo, in the ports or on the parts of the coast where they shall have sought shelter.

Art. 6.—It is agreed that the provisions of the present convention between the high contracting parties shall be reciprocally extended and in force, in all the possessions subject to their respective dominion in Europe.

Art. 7.—The present convention shall be in force for the term of ten years, from the 5th of April of the present year; and further, until the end of twelve months after either of the high contracting parties shall have given notice to the other of its intention to terminate its operation; each of the high contracting parties reserving to itself the right of giving such notice to the other, at the end of the said term of ten years: and it is agreed between them, that, at the end of the twelve months' extension agreed to on both sides, this convention, and all the stipulations thereof, shall altogether cease and determine.

Art. 8.—The present convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in London, within the space of one month, or sooner if possible.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms. Done at London, the twenty-sixth day of January, in the year of our Lord, 1826.

(L. S.) GEORGE CANNING.
(L. S.) WILLIAM HUSKISSON.
(L. S.) LE PRINCE DE POLIGNAC.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES.

Art. 1.—From and after the first of October of the present year, French vessels shall be allowed to sail from any port whatever of the countries under the dominion of his most Christian Majesty, to all the colonies of the United Kingdom (except those possessed by the East India Company), and to import into the said colonies all kinds of merchandise (being productions the growth or manufacture of France, or of any country under the dominion of France), with the exception of such as are prohibited to be imported into the said colonies, or are permitted to be imported only from countries under the British dominion; and the said French vessels, as well as the merchandise imported in the same, shall not be subject, in the colonies of the United Kingdom, to other or higher duties than those to which British vessels may be subject, on importing the same merchandise from any foreign country, or which are imposed upon the merchandise itself.

The same facilities shall be granted, reciprocally, in the colonies of France, with regard to the importation, in British vessels, of all kinds of merchandise (being productions the growth and manufacture of the United Kingdom, or of any country under the British dominion), with the exception of such as are prohibited to be imported into the said colonies, or are permitted to be imported only from countries under the dominion of France. And whereas all goods, the produce of any foreign country, may now be imported into the colonies of the United Kingdom, in the ships of that country, with the exception of a limited list of specified articles, which can only be imported into the said colonies in British ships, his majesty the king of the United Kingdom reserves to himself the power of adding to the said list of excepted articles any other, the produce of the French dominions, the addition whereof may appear to his majesty to be necessary for placing the commerce and navigation to be permitted to the subjects of each of the high contracting parties with the colonies of the other, upon a footing of fair reciprocity.

Art. 2.—From and after the same period, French vessels shall be allowed to export from all the colonies of the United Kingdom (except those possessed by the East India Company) all kinds of merchandise, which are not prohibited to be exported from such colonies in vessels other than those of Great Britain; and the said vessels, as well as the merchandise exported in the same, shall not be subject to other or higher duties than those to which British vessels may be subject, on exporting the said merchandise, or which are imposed upon the merchandise itself; and they shall be entitled

to the same bounties, drawbacks, and other allowances of the same nature, to which British vessels would be entitled, on such exportation.

The same facilities and privileges shall be granted, reciprocally, in all the colonies of France, for the exportation, in British vessels, of all kinds of merchandise, which are not prohibited to be exported from such colonies in vessels other than those of France.

These two additional articles shall have the same force and validity as if they were inserted, word for word, in the convention signed this day. They shall be ratified, and the ratification shall be exchanged at the same time.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed the same, and have affixed thereto the seals of their arms. Done at London, the 26th of January, in the year of our Lord 1826.

(L. S.) George Canning.
(L. S.) William Huskisson.
(L. S.) Le Prince de Polignac.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday, February 7.

Mr. Cowper—Clerk Assistant.] The Earl of *Liverpool* rose to call their lordships' attention to a motion founded on the letter of Mr. Cowper, which he had read yesterday. He had the satisfaction of feeling that the motion with which he should conclude was one which would meet with no opposition. Their lordships knew how that gentleman had discharged the important duties of his office for a period of forty-one years. There was no instance of an individual having discharged his duty with more diligence, assiduity, and integrity, than Mr. Cowper had done. The situation was important in various respects. It was necessary that the person who filled it should be well acquainted with the course and forms of judicial proceedings. The office was also important from its connexion with the forms and regulations of the House. This was a kind of knowledge which could only be acquired by experience; and it was no disgrace to any one who sat on the woolsack to say, that he might be assisted by Mr. Cowper. No one better knew than the individual of whom he was speaking, what was due to the dignity of the House and to the maintenance of its orders. Besides, his duty had been always discharged with so much propriety and urbanity, that during the long period of forty-one years, no one had ever had occasion to complain of his conduct. For his own part, he could speak to a period of twenty years, and he did not recollect any instance in which he had given offence. The late earl of Rosslyn, when chancellor, had recommended that a pension of 1,000*l.* per annum should be granted to the clerk on retiring from office. Mr. Cowper had then stated, that if nothing further should be granted to him, he would be perfectly satisfied. Their lordships, however, would not avail themselves of this readiness to wave any future claim, when they took a view of the circumstances of the case. They had some years ago turned their attention to what was due to the gentlemen sitting at the table of the House. They had now to take into their consideration a case of retirement, and he was convinced that they would willingly concur in doing what was not an act of liberality but of justice. He would conclude by moving, that "That this House receives with sincere concern, the resignation of Henry Cowper, esq., and think it right to record the sense they entertain of the zeal, ability, diligence, and integrity with which he executed the important duties of his office during a period of more than forty years. Also, that an humble address be presented to the king, laying before his majesty a copy of the letter of the said Henry Cowper, esq., and likewise the resolution of the House respecting that gentleman, and recommending him to his majesty's royal grace and bounty."

The resolution was agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, February 7.

Stamping of Small Country Notes.] Mr. *Calcraft* begged to ask a question of the gentlemen on the Treasury bench, upon a subject of considerable public interest. He understood that, of its own authority, government had taken upon itself to refuse the issue of any stamps for one and two pound country notes. If this was the fact, he thought it a great stretch of power.

Mr. *Herries* said, it was perfectly true that the government had taken upon itself to refuse stamps for one and two pound country notes. He imagined, that the understanding was general; that, if necessary, a short bill might be brought in to provide for exigencies, until the plan of the chancellor of the Exchequer was regularly stated. As the matter, however, was to come on so soon as Fri-

day next, government had deemed it expedient to take upon itself the responsibility of refusing any further stamps for the country small notes; in order to prevent the issue of very large quantities, which would no doubt have been called for in the interim.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, it was the first time he had known government take upon itself such a responsibility, under such circumstances; and this, too, without even taking the opinion of the law officers of the Crown as to its legality. If the exigency was so pressing, a short bill ought to have been brought in; and the forms of the House might have been dispensed with. For himself, he thought the course most unjustifiable; and that it exposed the parties to actions of damages.

Election Laws in Ireland.] Mr. *R. Martin*, in moving for leave to bring in his bill, called upon every gentleman who had complained of the state of the 40*s*. freeholders in Ireland, to assist in passing a measure which was intended to place those voters upon a more respectable footing. By showing the receipt for all rent due up to the time of the election, the 40*s*. freeholders would be rendered really independent. At present it was well known that their property was in danger of being swept away, if they voted contrary to the inclination and bidding of their landlords. The tenants would prove themselves before the world to be much better qualified for exercising the rights of electors, could they show a full discharge for their rent. If they were in arrears, and the landlords wished them to vote independently, they could give them the receipt. No member who wished well to Ireland would deny them the boon which he now proposed. There was one evil more which it was desirable to correct. Any one having a majority of the magistracy on his side, might succeed in preventing the adversary from registering a sufficiency of votes to secure his return. In his own county he had been prevented for twelve months from registering a number of freeholders, and in the mean time the election went by. Such a power ought not to be left for any man to abuse. He would propose, that the clerk of the peace should have due notice of the application of the freeholders to be registered, and in failure of his attendance, a person should be sworn in who should be bound to take names, and hand them over to the clerk for him to register. He had as yet had no opportunity of conferring with Irish members on the subject. He then moved for leave to bring in a bill "to alter and amend the Election Laws in Ireland."

Mr. *Hutchinson* said, that any measure to alter the law of election must, at the eve of a general election, be looked at with peculiar jealousy.

Sir *H. Parnell* said, that the plan of compelling people to show receipts for the discharge of rent, would be very objectionable.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, February 9.

State of Ireland.] The Marquis of *Lansdown* wished to ask of the noble lord opposite, how far the suggestions thrown out in the report of the committee of the House on the State of Ireland, imperfect as they were, had been acted upon. He called them imperfect, certainly not from any disposition to speak slightingly of the labours of the persons who composed the committee, of whom he himself was one, but because they were from the nature of the inquiry imperfect, and the committee themselves called them imperfect. However, a great many suggestions of importance had been thrown out on the subject of education and other matters connected with the state of Ireland, and he supposed the king's government had acted upon those suggestions as far as was found practicable. There were circumstances in the state of Ireland which rendered it very desirable that some of the suggestions should be carried into effect without delay. He was therefore very anxious to learn what had been done in pursuance of the suggestions in the report.

The Earl of *Liverpool* professed himself ready to give the noble marquis every information in his power on the subject to which he had referred. In doing this, he would take the report of the committee for the basis of his explanation, and would go over the points suggested one by one. The first suggestion related to an alteration of the law of landlord and tenant. The subject had been referred to the law officers of the Crown, who had had it for some time under their consideration, and the result of their opinion had at last been

digested and prepared for the consideration of parliament. What he had to say on the next point was not so satisfactory. The subject of grand jury presentments had been, and still was, under the anxious consideration of government; but it was not in such a state that any measure upon it could soon be submitted to the consideration of parliament. The next point was the criminal and civil business of the quarter sessions, on which he could not say that any thing was done. The next suggestion related to assistant barristers. It was recommended that they should not act as counsellors, and that was agreed to. The next points were the constitution of civil and criminal courts, the process of custodiam, the summary regulations of sheriffs and sub-sheriffs. Upon these points a report would hereafter be made. The next point was the administration of justice by magistrates in corporate towns. On this subject a bill was prepared. The next topic related to fictitious forty-shilling freeholders. On this subject he was not prepared to say that any measure was in progress for the consideration of parliament. Among the succeeding points of suggestion were the extension of public works, additional accommodations for lunatics, and regulations of manor courts. With regard to them nothing particular had been done; but, the two most important suggestions related to tithes and education. Upon the first of these topics he could assert, that the measures which had been adopted by parliament had been most successful; so successful as to exceed the expectations of himself, the original proposer. Returns had been received from all the dioceses of Ireland, with the exception of two. From these returns, it appeared that the act had been carried into execution, with success, in at least one fourth of the parishes in Ireland. But these returns did not afford evidence of all the advantages derived from the measure. The agreements which were made in other parishes, in consequence of the act, but which rendered its operations unnecessary, were to be reckoned among its good effects. The operation of the act had been found most beneficial in the south and west of Ireland; and in the county of Cork, the business of the assistant barrister had been reduced one half in consequence of the absence of tithe causes. With regard to the point of education, it was wished to act on the system suggested, but many difficulties had been experienced. In Ireland, prejudices were very strong with regard to education, both among Catholics and Protestants. It was therefore thought, that the best way would be to desire the commissioners to try an experiment in some place where it was not likely any resistance would be made to their plan. They readily undertook the task, and had since been employed in endeavouring to accomplish the object. It would certainly have been most desirable if the system originally proposed could have been carried into effect. Many difficulties had occurred; and the misfortune was, that every one had a system of his own. If, however, the experiment was once fairly tried, he had no doubt that it would succeed.

Lord *Ellenborough* had heard with regret what the noble lord had said about grand-jury presentments. He was sorry that no measure was in preparation on that subject. There certainly were not too few, but too many roads in Ireland. These roads were so many jobs, and were managed in such a way that the grand juries had not the means of doing justice. He was convinced that most of the money raised for making roads in Ireland was thrown away, as far as regarded the interest of the public. Part of a road was made this year, and part another; but the benefit which the public was to derive from it was postponed till the whole was completed, which might be twenty years; and till that period he considered the money completely thrown away. In a part where a gentleman resided, the roads were kept in very good order; but it often happened that where the country was populous, they were in very bad condition. With regard to the corporations, he believed the administration of justice was sometimes corrupt, and he thought that inquiry ought to be made into the mode of admitting persons into their freedom. He did not know how far the attention of government had been directed to the question of relief to the poor. For his own part, his opinion was very strong against any thing being done in that way. With regard to the question of education, it was his firm conviction, that until the Catholics gained their rights, they would never agree to any system of education which had been suggested. The public mind was at present greatly exasperated in consequence of the rejection of the measure of last session, and therefore any

suggestions on the subject were not likely to be listened to.

Lord *Clifden* believed, that the government would be glad to put an end to the grand-jury presentment system, if they could; but that was not easily accomplished. He agreed with the noble lord in what he had said about the roads, the management of which was often an enormous and shameful job.

The Earl of *Liverpool* assured the noble lord, that any suggestion respecting the evils of grand-jury presentments should not be lost. The subject was under consideration. With regard to the administration of justice in corporate towns, whatever evils there might be to complain of, they could not be with propriety corrected by any general laws, because, the rights of corporations were secured by charter. He had no objection to a law to meet particular cases, but a general law would affect those who had discharged their duty properly, as well as those who had neglected it. Besides, it was to be recollected, that when individuals found themselves aggrieved, they had their remedy in a court of law. He should be extremely anxious to see something done for the poor, if it were practicable. At the same time he was not prepared to say that any thing was practicable.

Lord *Ellenborough* said, he should not be satisfied with any alteration on the subject of grand-jury presentments respecting roads, unless it was provided that no road should be undertaken except upon the report of a sworn surveyor. He also thought that no road should be undertaken without the sanction of government.

The Earl of *Darnley* said, that no agreement on the subject of education could be expected in Ireland, so long as the Catholics were deprived of their rights. The discontent produced by that denial of justice prevented every plan of reform from succeeding. Let the anxiety of the noble earl opposite to benefit that country be as strong as he asserted it to be, still, so long as the principles he avowed last session were acted upon, it was impossible there could be tranquillity in Ireland. He might as well attempt to erect a perfect building on an insecure foundation. With such an obstacle to improvement, all the efforts of the noble lord must fail. On the subject of education, an opportunity had occurred, before the rejection of the Catholic bill, to do much. There was a disposition on the part both of Catholics and Protestants to give way to each other; but the extinguisher on the question of emancipation had put an end to all hope of conciliation. With regard to the poor, he did not think that a system of poor laws ought to be established in Ireland.

STATE OF THE CURRENCY.] The Marquis of *Lansdown* rose to call the attention of their lordships to one of the most important questions which could be brought under their consideration. He intended to submit to them a series of motions, the object of which would be to reach the source of that embarrassment, which had prevailed, and still prevailed in commercial affairs. In doing this he was desirous of offering a few observations for the purpose of expressing the opinion which he entertained on the subject. He was the more desirous of submitting these few observations to their lordships, because he entertained an apprehension, that in the opinions he had formed on the subject, he had the misfortune to differ, respecting the causes of the present crisis, from some persons in that House, and also out of it, for whose opinions he entertained the highest respect. Before he proceeded further, he begged it might not be understood, that he intended to suggest, or that he expected, through any of the documents for which he should move, to reach any thing like a remedy for the existing evil. His opinion, founded upon what he conceived to be the nature of the evil, was, that it must be allowed to work its own cure. The state of the currency had turned the exchanges against the country, and gold disappeared. There was an accumulation of stock, and the consequence was, that any man who purchased at a maximum, and sold at a minimum was ruined or injured. The embarrassment would continue until, going through the whole community, it should be corrected by that increased demand which would be produced by the reduction of prices. Then would return, not that artificial prosperity, which had been witnessed, but that real prosperity which the country was capable of attaining, under its present state of taxation. He believed it was the opinion of the king's ministers themselves, that no adequate remedy could be applied to the evil. Concurring in this opinion, he thought that no time should

be lost by parliament in investigating the cause, and if no remedy could be found, to endeavour to prevent the recurrence of one of the most tremendous and searching convulsions ever experienced in any country, and that in a time of profound peace. There were two classes of evils, both of which might be referred, in some degree, to the same cause, and yet they were in their consequences essentially different. The first was the state of the currency, which, running into excess and causing the exportation of the precious metals, affected prices and the state of the exchanges. These constituted a class of evils by itself, but one which it was the duty of parliament strictly to investigate, in order to prevent its return. Another evil attending the state of the currency was, the insecurity with which it visited the lower orders of the community, by depriving them of the value of their labour and the profits of their industry. Important as the first class of evil was, this was by far the most serious grievance of the two. When he recollected the important prerogatives of the Crown —and all prerogatives of the Crown existed only for the benefit of the subject —none appeared to him more valuable or more efficacious than that of coining money, which, interposed as a shield between ignorance and fraud, protected those persons, and secured to them their humble earnings. Those who depended upon their labour ought to be protected from being involved in the ruinous consequences of speculation. The state of the currency, however, exposed those classes of persons to ruin who had no share in speculation, and who ought not to be placed within the reach of the evils which it occasioned. He would ask any of their lordships who had happened to be in a country town when one of those failures had taken place, whether he could bring to mind the scene of complicated misery, and distress which he must have witnessed, without feeling that it was incumbent on him to do all in his power to prevent a recurrence of the most dreadful calamity to which a community could be exposed. If one of the hundreds of thousands who had been exposed to this evil had been stopped in the highways and robbed of his property, such an event would have fixed the greatest stigma on the energy of government and the foresight of the legislature. And, where was the difference between being thus robbed, and being despoiled of property by the operations of an excessive paper currency? There was said to be this difference between the two cases—that the persons attacked on the highway would have the means of defending themselves from attack whilst the community had no means of escaping from that which, sooner or later, was sure to fall upon them, in the shape of one of the greatest evils which it was possible to be subjected to. The evil consequences of the system to which he alluded were felt in all their severity by the labouring classes. In country towns local paper was usually the only currency in which they were paid for their labour. If they refused to receive the paper in payment, they must go without the reward for the labour to which they were entitled. The state of the currency as connected with the issue of small notes was, therefore, a subject which called for the serious attention of parliament. The motion with which he should conclude, was not intended to attack in any way the measures which government were about to propose for the consideration of parliament. With regard to the proposed measures respecting the issue, or rather the prevention of the issue, of small notes, he thought it would be more difficult for ministers to show good grounds for having authorized the continuance of that issue, at a time when the benefit of a metallic currency had been obtained, than to prove the necessity of putting an effectual stop to any further issue. He trusted, therefore, that their lordships would second the views of government by repealing a measure, which in an ill-advised hour, parliament had been induced to adopt. He concurred in the desire expressed by the noble earl opposite, to check the issue of small notes; and he believed there was no person who had read the papers on their lordships' table, but must be of opinion that the excessive issue of small notes had had the effect of driving the precious metals out of the country, as well as of raising prices during the last two years. This observation applied more particularly to the notes of country bankers. The effect produced by an excessive issue of small notes had been correctly described in a pamphlet which had already been noticed in terms of great praise in that House, and which proceeded from a gentleman who united in an eminent degree practical knowledge with theoretical accuracy. He

meant Mr. Tooke. That gentleman had justly stated, that the effect of such an excessive issue of small notes was not only to form an addition to the general capital of the country, but to operate immediately as an addition to that part of the capital which was employed in speculation; and, in proportion as it operated to swell the amount of capital devoted to speculation, it had a direct tendency to raise prices in an artificial degree. The only circumstance which had surprised him, and doubtless many of their lordships, in the progress of the evil was, that under a state of law which provided for a metallic circulation, and for the convertibility of paper into specie, the check presented by that conversion had not sooner operated. That, perhaps, was to be accounted for by this circumstance—that a large artificial addition to capital having been created by an excessive issue of paper, a considerable time must elapse before the cause of the increase could be correctly ascertained. The first effect of an issue of country bank paper was, to create an artificial abundance of capital; the accumulation of capital caused a reduction of the rate of interest; by the reduction in the rate of interest facilities were afforded for speculation; speculation produced an effect upon prices; the alteration in prices checked the progress of mercantile exports, and that caused the precious metals to be sent out of the country. Then ensued that lamentable distress which arose from an accumulation of stock purchased at high prices being obliged to be sold at greatly reduced prices under the influence of alarm. That he believed was a correct statement of the train of events which was always liable to proceed from a paper currency, such as that which was permitted to exist until 1833. He therefore thought it was the duty of parliament to check the issue of small notes as speedily as was consistent with safety; and the mode in which the noble earl proposed to effect that object was, as far as he understood it, extremely proper. He understood that the noble earl intended to propose, that no more one and two pound notes should be allowed to be issued, and that the currency of those already in circulation should be limited to three years. He must, however, take that opportunity of stating, that whilst he concurred with the noble earl as to the expediency of stopping the issue of small notes, he had heard with great surprise, of a step taken by government which he conceived to be unnecessary, and unconstitutional, for the purpose of defeating an existing law. What made the matter worse was, that this proceeding had taken place during the sitting of parliament, without any communication having been made to it. He could not see why, if government had the power to dispense with an existing law without the intervention of Parliament the same dispensing power might not be applied to other laws, and though perhaps judiciously exercised in the first instance, grow up into a system of interference with established laws on the part of the government, which would have the most dangerous results. It was therefore the duty of parliament to reprobate the first instance of the exercise of such a power. He must deeply regret, if ministers considered it necessary to suspend an existing law, that they had not communicated the fact to parliament, and at least obtained the sanction of a resolution for the course which they had pursued. He hoped that ministers would come to parliament for a bill of indemnity, for having done that which, however expedient, was constitutionally wrong. With respect to the measure of stopping the issue of small notes, he entertained no apprehension from it. It was, he knew, the opinion of many, that a paper currency, subject to all the evils to which it was liable, was nevertheless a species of accommodation, of which the country with its existing amount of taxation stood in need. That was a most important point for consideration. But it would become their lordships, before they concurred in the continuance of that great evil, to weigh well the value of the accommodation which it was calculated to afford. After the most attentive consideration, he could not bring his mind to believe, that it was at all advantageous to enable a person to do that without capital which should only be done with capital—that it could be beneficial, by throwing artificial capital into the market, to produce a rise of prices, which must, upon the artificial capital being withdrawn, be followed by a corresponding fall. He knew of no system of legislation which would prevent such an artificial rise of prices from being followed by a revolution, bringing ruin and destruction along with it. It being admitted, that the effect of an issue of paper was to raise prices for a time, it remained to be considered, whe-

ther the average of prices might not be as great under a metallic currency. Suppose a commodity which, under a paper currency, sold at one time for 100*l.*, and at another for 50*l.*, should, under a metallic currency, sell at two different periods for 90*l.* and 60*l.*; the average was the same, and it was certainly more advantageous to the interests of the community, that a steady scale of prices should exist, than that a constant fluctuation of price should take place, occasioned by a system of paper issues, which had the effect of driving the precious metals out of the country, and thus producing a sudden vacuum, under the influence of which prices fell much lower than they ever could under a metallic circulation. The alarm which some persons felt at the proposed limitation of the paper currency was, he was convinced, perfectly groundless. A great deal of the apparent prosperity of last year, by which many persons were deceived, was manufactured for the occasion. As was the case with all articles of spurious manufacture, its acquisition proved to be a loss rather than an advantage. This was not the case with prosperity founded on a solid basis —the result of real capital in the market, capable of being immediately realized in the form of a metallic currency. The subject of the currency branched out into many different parts, with respect to each of which a variety of opinions was entertained. One of the most extraordinary opinions he had ever heard was that which some persons entertained; namely, that this, the most opulent country in the universe, could not procure such a share of the precious metals, distributed through the world as would enable her to carry on her commercial transactions. He knew that such an opinion was contrary to fact, and he derived his knowledge from accounts on their lordships' table, and from others which were within the reach of every one. It was proved by experience, that when any occasion for it existed, a flow of gold into this country never failed to take place. In deference to that species of mystery with which the Bank of England liked to surround itself to a greater degree, perhaps, than was expedient, he would not particularize dates; but he would confidently state, that on one occasion the Bank was able in the course of two years to increase a treasure of less than three millions of gold to one of fourteen millions. He therefore felt no apprehension of a scarcity of the precious metals. He, however, wished it to be understood, that he reserved himself with respect to the question of the effect of the amount of taxation taken in connexion with a metallic currency on the general means of the country. Whilst he entertained the opinion which he had expressed, of the propriety of checking the issue of small notes of country banks, he was equally desirous to see the Bank of England deprived of the power of circulating notes of the same kind. And this brought him to the consideration of the share which the Bank was supposed to have had in contributing to the crisis of last year. Having arrived at that part of his subject, it would be most unfair to pass by the opportunity of stating, that in the recent transactions between government and the Bank, with respect to the surrender of part of the privileges of that body for the purpose of facilitating the formation of solid banking companies, and the readiness which they had displayed to meet the public necessities, did them great honour. Giving them praise on that account, he was disposed to go further, and say that the Bank directors deserved great credit for the promptitude with which they endeavoured to arrest the effects of the late panic by a great issue of small notes. But, having said thus much, it would be uncandid in him not to add, that the Bank, in the first instance, so far from having arrested the progress of the late evils, had increased them by the extent of its issues of paper. He believed it would appear that in 1825, but more particularly in 1824, whilst the country-bank paper was increasing, considerable additions were made to the issues of paper and discounts of the Bank of England. After the language which was held by the highest authority of the Bank some time ago, he had a right to state, that the period to which he had alluded was not the proper time in which such issues should have taken place. It was a time when an efficacious check upon paper circulation might have been administered by the Bank, and could not have failed to produce a most salutary effect. He would explain the allusion which he had made to the words of an individual connected with the Bank. During the progress of that inquiry in which their lordships were engaged some time back, and the result of which was known by the name of the Bullion report, one of the highest persons connected with

the Bank, when asked what he considered to be the criterion (independently of the exportation of the precious metals) of an excess in the issue of paper currency, replied, "a state of trade in which money is hawked about every-where, and many persons are induced to undertake uncertain and imprudent speculations." He would ask whether, independently of the exportation of the precious metals which was actually taking place in 1824 to South America, a more accurate description could be given of the state of trade and speculation in England at that period, than was to be found in the words which he had just quoted. Money was then hawked about every-where, and the most imprudent speculations were going on. He had a right, therefore, to say, that it was deeply to be lamented that the Bank did not at an earlier period adopt measures for narrowing their paper-currency, and diminishing their discounts. His object was, to obtain an account of the amount of issues of small notes from the Bank during the last two years, in order to show the effect which those issues had produced upon prices. He was inclined to hope much from the abandonment of part of the Bank's privilege. With respect to the measure which would require country bankers to give security, it appeared to him to be attended with so much difficulty in its application, that he doubted whether it could be carried into effect. He thought that much more good would be effected by giving publicity to the transactions of public banks than by requiring securities. This would operate as a check upon improper conduct, whilst it would leave them in full possession of their funds, which would, in a great degree, be tied up under the proposed system of securities. He hoped, therefore, that the noble earl would abandon that part of his plan. He ventured to suggest, that it would be expedient, that wherever country-bank notes should be issued, there they should be made payable. Such a provision would remedy the inconvenience which had been found to result from country banks establishing branch banks in different towns, which issued notes payable only at the fountain head, or original bank.—He had now stated the observations which occurred to him with respect to the measures which it was the intention of ministers to propose. Many persons, he was aware, were of opinion that the effect of those measures would be to bring back the currency to the state in which it was placed by Mr. Peel's bill, and that it would, in that event, be impossible for us, with the existing load of taxation, to fulfil our pecuniary obligations. These same persons approved of the artificial paper currency, because they considered that it enabled them to fulfil those obligations which otherwise they could not do. He was unwilling to admit the possibility of the country being incapable of fulfilling all its engagements. If he could entertain such an opinion, he would, say, in God's name declare the fact, and adopt a system of policy applicable to the situation in which we were placed. Proceed upon fixed principles, but abandon a system which caused perpetual revolutions, creating at one moment a state of artificial prosperity, and at another plunging the interests of the country into a state of unnatural depression—a system which scattered ruin through every part of the community, depriving every man of the means of knowing the value of the currency, and making him liable to have the produce of years of industry almost valueless. He hoped and believed that the measures to be proposed by ministers would have the effect of putting an end to a system which produced such calamitous effects, and of placing the banking establishments of the country on a solid foundation. The intended measures would not, he understood, apply to Scotland or Ireland, but he trusted to see, at a future period, some measures founded on similar principles applied to those parts of the country. The noble marquis concluded with moving for, "1. An account of the number of Bank of England notes in circulation on the 15th of February, May, August, and November in each year, from 1819 to 1825, distinguishing the notes for 5*l*. and under; and a like account of notes of the banks of Scotland and Ireland. 2. An account of all the notes issued by country bankers in England, Scotland, and Ireland, from 1819, up to the latest period. 3. An account of the number of bankrupts in England, Scotland, and Ireland, from 1819 to the latest periods at which the return could be made, distinguishing those who were bankers. 4. Copies of all charters granted to banking establishments during the same period."

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, he did not feel it necessary to trouble their lordships with more than a few words on the present occasion; first, because it would be his

duty at a very early period to submit to the consideration of the House one of the measures of which he gave notice on the first day of the session; and secondly, because, having listened with the utmost attention to what had fallen from the noble marquis, there was hardly a sentence which he had uttered, with which he was not disposed entirely to agree. So long as the Bank of England continued under restriction, parliament had a right to call, from time to time, for the accounts of the Bank, in order that they might be fully acquainted with the proceedings of that body; but the restriction having expired, and the Bank being under no control, he did not conceive that parliament was entitled to call for information from them as a matter of course. The information which the noble marquis sought for might, however, be obtained, though perhaps not so completely, from the Stamp-office. But though he did not consider the motion a matter of course, yet, connected as it was with a great legislative measure about to be submitted to parliament, with the concurrence (with respect to one of its branches) of the Bank itself, he thought their lordships had a claim to any information which might enable them to form a correct judgment on the subject; and he thought it would be most ungracious on the part of the Bank to throw any unnecessary obstruction in the way. He was happy to say, however, that the Bank directors entertained no such disposition. They thought that, under the special circumstances of the case, parliament ought to have the information which was sought for. The noble marquis had alluded to a transaction with respect to which he felt that a considerable degree of responsibility attached to his majesty's government. He alluded to the stopping for the present of the stamping of any one or two pound country-bank notes. The measure was not adopted, until notice had been given to parliament of the intention of government to effect such an object by legislative enactment; and it was only resolved upon in order to prevent the views of parliament from being defeated whilst the bill was in progress. The proceeding was not adopted upon light grounds. Government had positive information that there existed an intention of doing that which would have thrown considerable obstacles in the way of the measures which it was the object of ministers to recommend to parliament. If he were asked, why he had not adopted the course of applying to parliament for a short bill to sanction the proceedings which had been adopted, he would reply, that that step could not have been taken without the greatest partiality and injustice. The bankers near the metropolis would have got their notes stamped whilst the bill was passing, an advantage of which the bankers at a more distant part of the country could not avail themselves. Under these circumstances, it was considered advisable to adopt the measure without any previous application to parliament. It was done to prevent the desirable object which government had in view from being defeated.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* denied that the issues of small notes had the effect of driving the metallic currency out of the country. The present distress, in his opinion, was not occasioned by the currency so much as by the spirit of extravagant speculation which lately prevailed throughout the country. The withdrawing of nineteen millions, which was the amount supposed to be withdrawn from the circulation of the country, was the true cause of the calamity. That these speculations had been indulged in was no fault of his. He had done all that lay in his power to warn the public from entering into these rash and hazardous enterprises; as had also the noble and learned lord, whom he regretted not to see now on the wool-sack. As to the Scotch banks, they were certainly found by experience to be established on principles of perfect security; but he was apprehensive, if the intelligent persons who introduced the system of Scotch banking were brought up to the bar of this House and examined, that they would admit that the Scotch system was, in many respects, incompatible with the commercial transactions of this country, and unfit to be introduced into England.

The Earl of *Carnarvon* said, he approved highly of the plan of extending the number of partners in banking establishments, and agreed also in the propriety of each of the partners of such establishments being made liable, in the whole amount of his property, for the concerns of the Bank. This would create a class of merchant bankers who would have an interest in attending to the affairs of the Bank, and would operate as a check against over-issues. Accompanied with these measures, he would be glad to see the country return to silver as the stand-

ard of the currency, such as silver was at the old Mint-price. This would, in his opinion, place the currency on the most satisfactory footing. As to the proposed measure of withdrawing the one and two pound notes from circulation, it was, in his opinion, by no means calculated to remove the evils by which the country was afflicted. The adoption of this measure would operate injuriously to the farmer, and to the humble class of agriculturists and dealers, who principally carried on their business by means of the one and two pound notes. Great injury would be done generally to the community by withdrawing so large a sum as six or seven millions from the circulation of the country. This inevitable evil would follow from it, that it would contract the circulation of the country at a time when it required an extension. Whatever might have been the evil consequences of over-issues, the distress under which the country laboured must be augmented to an incalculable degree, unless parliament went to the root of the evil. That the withdrawing the one and two pound notes from circulation, and the substitution of a metallic currency, did not go to the root of the evil appeared from the letter of the first lord of the Treasury, and the chancellor of the Exchequer, to the Bank directors. It was there stated, that, "though a recurrence to a gold circulation in the country, for the reasons already stated, might be productive of some good, it would, by no means, go to the root of the evil." Here then, upon the acknowledgment of these gentlemen, the withdrawing of the one and two pound notes would not be an effectual remedy for the distresses. The letter proceeded thus:—"We have abundant proof of the truth of this position, in the events which took place in the spring of 1793, when a convulsion occurred in the money transactions and circulation of the country, more extensive than that which we have recently experienced. At that period nearly a hundred country banks were obliged to stop payment, and parliament was induced to grant an issue of Exchequer bills to relieve the distress. Yet, in the year 1793, there were no one or two pound notes in circulation in England, either by country banks or by the Bank of England." As the distress prevailed, therefore, when one and two pound notes were not in circulation, the House ought to pause before it gave its assent to a measure which would withdraw so large a sum from circulation. At the period of the South-Sea scheme, there were no one or two pound notes, yet then there was distress. In 1793 was there not distress? And at various other periods, was not distress as great and even greater, than at present? As, then, these evils existed when small notes were not in existence, he was unwilling to give his assent to the abolition of the small notes, without some further information. For his part he did not see the great evil of a paper-currency. At the time of the Bank restriction in 1797, the business of the country was chiefly transacted in paper, and during the subsequent progress of the war, down to the resumption of cash payments, a paper currency was maintained, without our experiencing such distress as we did at present. To prevent over-issues, means should be devised to prevent a greater circulation of paper than there was metal in the country to meet it; and if this were done, he saw no objection to the circulation of notes whether of great or small amount. As to extravagant speculations, at present, there was no very buoyant spirit of that kind afloat. The calamity now complained of was, not that there was too much gold, or too many notes, but that there was neither one nor the other, and the currency of the country was at a stand. An objection had been made to small notes, that by extending our circulation, they had a tendency to diminish the interest of money. Now, even if that were the case, it did not weigh as an objection with him; for in all states in prosperity, and where there was much money and much commerce, money was held at a low rate of interest; whereas, the interest of money was always high where there was little money. In all the proposed alterations of the currency, we should never omit to bear in mind that enormous weight upon the country—the national debt. When it was considered that the interest of that debt was to be paid, the effect of withdrawing six or seven millions from circulation must be most injurious. The effect of such a contraction of the currency must be, that the chancellor of the Exchequer would next year be obliged to state that the revenue of the country was not sufficient to discharge the interest on the national debt, and the expenses of the establishment. We were now in the tenth year of peace, and there was no likelihood of our being able to do more, during the

probable period we might continue at peace, than supply and relieve our immediate exigencies. The currency of the country had gone through every variety of fluctuation—it had been over and over again tried in the crucible—paper was converted into gold, and gold again into paper, and still a new change was found necessary. In Scotland, an approved system of Banking had been brought to the test of experience. This was admitted in the letter of the noble earl opposite. "In Scotland there are not more than thirty banks; and these banks have stood firm amidst all the convulsions in the money-market in England, and amidst all the distresses to which the manufacturing and agricultural interests in Scotland, as well as in England, have occasionally been subject." And it was not a little extraordinary, that whilst ministers were inducing the people of England to abandon a system which sanctioned a small note circulation, they admitted the efficacy of such a system in Scotland. He would wish to see banking establishments of equal solidity in this country. He was persuaded that in returning to a metallic currency, every relation between landlord and tenant, and between man and man, would undergo a considerable change. When their lordships assembled next year, he should be happy to find that the government had funds sufficient to meet the yearly expenditure. In order to embrace the whole of the question, he would move for a return of all the notes issued by the Bank of England and the country banks since the year 1790.

The said motions were agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, February 9.

Country Banks that have become Bankrupts.] Mr. *Hume* moved for a return, "of the number of Country Banks issuing notes that have become bankrupts since January 1816, up to the present time; stating the place where the banks were established, the number of partners in each bank, the amount of debts proved against each, and the amount per cent of dividends paid or declared upon each, as far as the same can be complied with." The House would then have before it, a statement of the extent to which the public banking had suffered by the country system.

Mr. *Grenfell* wished the account to extend to Scotland.

Mr. *Hume* said, he had no objection.

Mr. *Maberly* thought the account objectionable, as an intrusion upon the affairs of individuals. If the principle was once established, that any member might move for an inquiry into the private concerns of parties, it was difficult to see where the operation of that principle might stop. How could that House entertain cognizance of the debts which had been proved. He hoped the Chancellor of the Exchequer would not accede to such an improper motion.

Mr. *Grenfell* wished Scotland to be included, because he was persuaded that a return to the motion, as regarded Scotland, would be nil.

Mr. *John Smith* said, that when an intrusion upon the private affairs of individuals was spoken of, it ought to be recollected of the country bankers, that they had in fact been dealing in that which was the money of the country. Theirs was quite a different case from that of merchants or ordinary traders; and he was therefore disposed to support the motion. He had not until that morning read the correspondence between the Treasury and the Bank; but, in reading it he had been much struck with a paragraph which stated, that the country banks, all of them, without exception, had for some time fostered, supported, and encouraged, a rash spirit of speculation. Now, in the name and on behalf of very many country bankers who claim to be considered men of honour, prudence, and integrity, he called on the chancellor of the Exchequer, to state the grounds upon which he had made that sweeping accusation. At the same time, it would, perhaps, be convenient to the right hon. gentleman to prove to parliament the sound policy of directing public odium against the country banks at this particular crisis.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* saw no objection whatever to the motion. He thought it quite reasonable that the House should be in possession of any facts relative to the number of country banks which had failed. Such a return could do no mischief to parties who might have failed and were in business again. With regard to the terms in which the country bankers were spoken of in the correspondence between the government and the bank, he could have no objection to give every explanation to those who might fancy themselves injured thereby. Most certainly, it never had been the in-

tention of ministers to convey the slightest imputation against individuals. Their argument went merely to the general system of country banking. And it was difficult to think that any member could have listened to the account given a few nights since by the hon. member for Taunton, of the course which a country banker was compelled to pursue in order to carry on his business profitably, without seeing that the system was calculated to produce the effects adverted to in the correspondence. In truth, an allusion to the system of country banking generally, and not to individuals, was all that ministers had contemplated; and that was the only interpretation which they imagined could be put upon the words in question; but even if the charge had been made against individuals, he could not look at it in the same light with the hon. member for Midhurst. Every man who possessed, and traded with, considerable capital, was, more or less, an encourager of speculation; and to say so, was neither an impeachment of his honour or his integrity.

Mr. *Calcraft* was happy to hear the explanation given by the right hon. gentleman; but, without that explanation, he certainly should not have understood the expressions, "rash speculations, aided, fostered, and abetted, by the country banks," as exactly placing the country bankers upon that advantageous ground which it seemed they really occupied in the right hon. gentleman's opinion. For himself, however, he denied the fact that it was by the issues of the country banks that the rash spirit of speculation, as it was called, which had existed in the country, and the enterprises to which that spirit had led, had been supported. Seventeen millions of paper could not have been issued by any country banks for purposes of speculation, and that speculation principally carried on in London. For, as fast as a country note made its appearance in London, it was instantly converted into a bank of England note, or into gold, or the banker was discredited. Those speculations, which, joined to the conduct of government, had done so much to disorder the country, never could have been carried on by country bank notes. To the motion he saw no objection. As far, however, as disclosure went, it would do the country bankers no harm, but good. It was well for ministers to talk of country paper! The right hon. gentleman had more accommodation paper in the market than all the country banks put together. No circumstance had more contributed to do mischief than the immense amount afloat of exchequer bills. Government, deal as it would with the system of the country banks, would do little good until the issue of exchequer-bills was limited. He could not place much confidence in any set of men who could speak on the 13th of January of the distresses of the country as being over.

Sir *J. Wrottesley* said, that during the last year, the country bankers had been almost the only class of persons who had not speculated. They had been rather the victims of the speculations of others, than speculators themselves.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* thought, that though it would be perfectly easy to obtain a return of the number of failures of country bankers, it would be extremely difficult to learn the amount of the dividend they had respectively paid. The object of the hon. gentleman appeared to be, to show the advantages of the Scotch system of banking, as compared with that obtaining in England; both with regard to its general security, and as not being obnoxious to the objections of encouraging undue adventure. But, if such were the hon. gentleman's view, Mr. Gurney said, he must entirely differ with him. There was nothing he should more deprecate than the introduction of the Scotch system into this country, as he was convinced, that its direct tendency would be to the increase of the number of bankruptcies, though not, perhaps, leading to the breakage of so many banks. The Scotch system was one which went, much more than that of England, towards facilitating speculations of every kind; but, it was the customer there who broke, and the banker who swept his securities.

Much had been said, and said very idly, of the degree in which the paper of the country bankers had aided in the delusions and frauds which had been practised on the public; but, in fact, the country banker is, of all mankind, the most interested in preventing speculation. The speculator is his natural enemy. If he gains, the profit is not the banker's; and, if he becomes insolvent, the banker is sure to lose. At the same time, there is an evil in the existing system, for which it seems difficult to find an adequate remedy. The banker allows an interest to the customer; consequently, he must

employ the money deposited with him; and, when the mass of the transactions of the country are such as they have been of late, it is impossible for him, with the utmost precaution, to avoid entirely the discount of bills, of which the basis may be partly commercial transactions, and partly mere speculation; whilst his circulation will necessarily be proportionably increased by the increased prices of all things, measured in a perpetually increasing medium; and, when any revulsion takes place, it is obvious that the banker must as necessarily pull in his advances, for his own security, with the greatest rapidity with which he can effect it, in order to meet his engagements; and thus greatly increase embarrassment, whenever embarrassment shall be general.

The hon. member then entered into the detail of the successive depreciations of the currency, since 1797. He said, it was agreed on all hands, in the debates of that House in 1812, that the depreciation had reached 35 per cent. Now, he considered that this 35 per cent, or something like it, had hung upon them ever since. At one time, through the abundance of paper circulation, it had spent itself on the currency: at another, when that paper was called in, it had fallen on prices. Then we had commercial embarrassment, and agricultural distress, till the necessities of all men had brought the right hon. gentleman's bill of 1819, by a sort of tacit agreement, into abeyance and commodities paid for in paper, found the prices at which they could be produced under the existing burthens of the community.

For his own part, he sincerely wished the circulation of the country out of the hands of private individuals. But, it was utterly impossible to do away with the paper currency of the country banks, without supplying some other medium, which should sustain prices in a manner to meet this depreciation, which had gone to 35 per cent in 1812; and this could, in his opinion, only be done by one of two measures—the one, the abandoning the law for making gold, at its present standard, the only legal tender; the other, issuing such amount of paper, either by government directly, or by the Bank, as should sustain the general sale value of commodities at something like their understood level.—Mr. Gurney said, that he felt some apology was due to the House, for having taken that occasion of expressing his sentiments on the subject; but as, in the more regular debate on the right hon. gentleman's motion to-morrow, many gentlemen of much more weight would probably be desirous of giving their opinions at length, he might then be precluded from an opportunity of stating what was his decided conviction; namely, that unless some measures of the nature adverted to were entertained, they would bring on an almost universal bankruptcy, and a degree of pressure, to which the embarrassments of 1816, 1821, and 1822, could hardly bear a comparison, and under which, how the multiplied engagements of the country, public and private, could possibly be met, was more than he could comprehend.

Mr. *Robertson* said, that the system upon which the Scotch banks were conducted, was that of creating an artificial capital, which was lent out in aid of the manufactures and trade of the country. That this system had been productive of great advantages, was proved by this, that it had raised Scotland from being the poorest country in Europe, to the state in which it at present was. The banking system in England was upon a different footing, it had the effect of keeping up a system of trading and manufacture which ministers were using every effort in their power to oppose. When they found that the system now pursued by ministers actually sent twenty four millions a year out of the country without any return, it would be clearly seen that nothing but our banking system could have prevented the present distresses of the country from having come upon her long before. And if ministers persevered in their intended plan of withdrawing the one and two pound country bank notes from circulation, they would aggravate those distresses ten fold. It was to him astonishing that the House should continue to look with silence upon this conduct on the part of his majesty's government; first causing of a great evil, then suddenly changing their measures, and thereby aggravating the distress which their first error had caused. He begged of the House to recollect this argument with respect to our commercial system, that our foreign commerce, including shipping and all, did not amount to more than forty millions a-year, while our manufactures, agriculture, and internal trade and commerce, amounted to one hundred and thirty millions per annum. Such being the case, it became

the duty of the landed and manufacturing interests, to check the progress of the evil. But when had there been any discussion upon the subject since the meeting of parliament? There had, indeed, been some motions for the production of papers and returns, but no hon. member had come forward to propose a remedy for the evil. On the contrary, every one seemed anxious to shut his eyes from the view of those miseries, the existence of which no one could deny.

Mr. *Tierney* wished to ask a question of the chancellor of the Exchequer, in order to solve a doubt suggested by the correspondence between the Bank and government, concerning branch banks. In the answer of the Treasury committee of the Bank to the communication from ministers, they said, "Finding also, that the proposal by the Bank of establishing branch banks is deemed by his majesty's ministers inadequate to the wants of the country, &c." What he wished to ask was, when the Bank made that proposal to establish branch banks, what was the nature of that proposition, and why it was not before the House?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that no proposition had, in fact, been made in the written communications of the Bank to establish branches of its own institution. Something of that kind might have passed in the course of the discussions, but certainly no direct proposition to establish branch banks of their own had been advanced in writing by the Bank.

Mr. *Tierney* said, that the Bank had said expressly, that the proposal which had been made by them was not one which ministers could adopt, because they considered it inadequate. Certainly, if such a proposition had been made by the Bank, it ought to be known to the House.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* repeated his denial of any proposition having been made in writing by the Bank to establish branch banks; though, if they had made such a proposition, ministers would have deemed it inadequate to the prevention of a crisis like that through which the country had just passed.

Mr. *Tierney.*—Then, in point of fact, the Bank did never make any such proposal ["No," across the table]. Then it ought not to have appeared in a written communication of their own that they did.

Mr. *Pearse* said, that the subject might have been touched upon verbally and incidentally, but no specific proposition had been made. The expressions in the answer of the Bank went too far. But, for years past, that plan had been repeatedly a subject of conversation.

Mr. *Hume* thought, that the trading in money ought not to be allowed to individuals, it being a branch of the prerogative of the sovereign. As to bringing before the public, individuals who had been unfortunate, there could be no objection on that ground, as those individuals had already appeared in the Gazette. His object was merely to lay before the House certain facts. That the public had suffered much from the recent failures, by the issuers of paper, was beyond doubt; and those losses ought not to rest upon the poorer classes of the community. He was anxious that the House should see the amount of loss which had been sustained from actual failures.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he was anxious to explain an observation of his which had been misunderstood by the hon. member for Wareham. That hon. member seemed to be of opinion, that he had thrown the whole blame of the excess of issues on the country banks. He wondered how the hon. member could have so misunderstood him. What he did say, was, that it was not possible to charge the whole evil, or even its origin, on the country banks, or upon any persons issuing paper. The speculations which had brought on the present crisis were of a character necessarily incident to all commercial countries, where there existed a great share of capital and enterprise. In all such cases, individuals would be found ready to take advantage of every circumstance favourable to their own interests. He had further said, that the speculations of 1819, whatever their immediate effect, had been followed by increased confidence and speculation.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, he was most ready to admit the right hon. gentleman's explanation. He felt it at the same time necessary to say, that the papers on the table went far to strengthen the impression he at first entertained of what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman.

The motion was then agreed to.

SILK TRADE.] Sir T. Lethbridge presented a petition from certain Silk Throwsters of Somerset, against the importation of foreign Silks.

Mr. *Robertson* called the attention of the House to one or two facts connected with this subject. It was said, that 30 per cent was a protecting duty for our silks; but he knew that wrought silks could be introduced, both from India and from France, at such a rate as to compete with our manufacturers when putting the raw material into the loom. Would the House, then, allow ministers to persevere in a system which would destroy a trade that the country had been nursing for ages? To compete with the French was impossible. They had a particular kind of silk which they never allowed to go forth but in a manufactured state. Let that silk be brought into our market, and it would be bought up at whatever price by our fashionables. These silks, once introduced, would drive our produce out of the market. Was the English manufacturer, with a load of debt hanging like a millstone round his neck, to be compelled to a competition with the French manufacturer, whose debt sat so lightly upon him that it was not felt as a burthen? Were they to tolerate such a proceeding? Let them call upon ministers to put this part of their new measures at rest. How else were they to get out of the difficulties and distresses under which the country laboured, unless by giving every stimulus to industry, which was at present at a stand. The labouring classes were without employment, and the means of procuring food or raiment; and yet ministers persisted in subjecting the manufacturers to the competition of cheaper markets.

Mr. *Baring* presented a petition from Taunton, against the introduction of French silks, which, he said, deserved the serious consideration of the House. The subject, he hoped, would undergo discussion at an early period, seeing that hundreds of thousands of people anticipated ruin and starvation from the importation of foreign silks. It was not now the time for him to go into that discussion; though it would be very desirable if the president of the Board of Trade could contrive to be in his place when petitions of this nature were sure to come on. He hoped to see the question set at rest. The conviction on his own mind was settled long ago. What he wished to see was, whether or no the House would support ministers in their desperate resolution. Great anxiety existed among the silk manufacturers, and great hopes were entertained by them, that the House would defend them against the ruin which awaited them from the measures pursued by government. He had no great confidence in that source of relief, when he recollected how his own objections to the measure had fared two years ago. But the public mind should be set at rest. The master silk-weavers could not find employment for their people until their own fate was known. Whether right or wrong, they all said, that if French silk goods were let in, there was no chance of selling a single yard of English silk. He could not approve of hearing them in a committee, because of the delay which would follow. Nor did he hope, if the committee were allowed, that they would be able to make out the case, that it was impossible for the English manufacture of silks to bear the competition of a free trade. The case which they had made out to him had left his mind without the shadow of a doubt. Still, the question ought to be set at rest by a bill. The conduct of government justified a suspicion, that they would not scruple to take liberties with the law. The late order to prevent the issuing of stamps from the Stamp-office, was a direct violation of the existing law. He was anxious to get rid of the one and two pound notes, but he wished to see them abolished gradually, and by legal means. He had to complain of a similar infraction with respect to the silk laws. A duty of 7*s*. 6*d*. a pound had been laid upon thrown silk. He had said at the time, that every penny of that protecting duty on thrown silk, must so far sacrifice the interest of the manufacturer. An order had lately gone down to state, that it was the intention of government to reduce that duty 2*s*. 6*d*., or from that to 3*s*., as they found that 5*s*. was a sufficient protection for the throwsters; so completely ignorant were ministers of that interest, concerning which they were so ready to advise enactments. As if the law and the parliament were as nothing compared with their own notions, they undertook to accept 5*s*. per lb. upon an article which was to have paid the state 7*s*. 6*d*. per lb. This was a strong case; and, like the other, might be justifiable by circumstances. But if so, it was the bounden duty of ministers, to have stated them to parliament, and sought protection from the offended law in a bill of indemnity. The whole trade was unhinged,

and the operatives were in the greatest straits. What he wished was, to impress the minds of ministers with the necessity of speedily taking their case into consideration. The petitioners had requested him to remove an impression which had been made by the hon. baronet (sir T. Lethbridge), that they were satisfied with the corn laws. They had directed him to contradict that statement. Their impression, on the contrary, was, that the principle of free trade must be greatly injurious to the general interests, unless it were extended to corn.

Mr. *Huskisson* wished to excuse himself for not being present sooner. His only apology was, that he had not been absent for his own convenience, but in discharge of the duties of his office, and from which he had repaired to the House. He knew that this apology was inadequate to the occasion; but it was the best he had to offer. As to the order of the Treasury to lower the duty on thrown silk, it was a mistake to state that it was done without authority from parliament. The board of trade having satisfied themselves, that 5*s.* was a sufficient protection, they had directed so much of the duty to be taken, and that bonds should be given for the excess of 2*s.* 6*d.* per pound, should parliament not concur with the government. The House would see at once, that the whole of the duty was secured to the public, should parliament think proper to exact it, and that ministers had by no means assumed a dispensing power over it. He would not now go into the discussion of the deranged state of the trade and currency of the country. When the subject was brought forward in the regular and formal manner, he should be quite prepared to meet the objections to the regulations in the silk trade, and all the other alterations in the commercial system which parliament had adopted. The hon. gentleman himself had given his sanction to much of what had been done; and there certainly was nothing more desirable, than that this matter should be fully discussed in that House.

Mr. *Davenport* implored ministers to take the subject of the silk trade again into consideration. He gave them credit for their intentions; but the consequences of their measures were just such as, two years ago, he had predicted. Open the ports of England, he had said, to foreign silk, and the home manufacturer must be ruined. In his neighbourhood, thousands were suffering extreme distress; and were chiefly supported by the warrant of the magistrate. This state of things could not last. What was to follow it? Clearly starvation. He called upon the landed and manufacturing interests to induce ministers to forego a plan which must ruin them all.

Sir *T. Lethbridge* said, that the hon. member for Taunton had mistaken his expressions, both as to time and meaning. It was not on a petition which he had presented, but in the course of the observations which were made on the report of the Address that he had stated that which he believed to be perfectly correct; namely, that the great body of the manufacturers took a more chaste view of the corn question than before. He had never taken upon him to say, that the manufacturers would have no complaints about the price of corn, however high; but only that, in the present state of the price of provisions, they did not complain of the Corn laws, but of the destruction of their trade. And, indeed, in their present condition, it would not be surprising if they were to complain of the price of provisions, however low. Yet, to be candid, he could not but look upon this alteration of the silk trade as an outwork to a similar alteration in the Corn laws, which, if not directly touched, was so by a side-wind, tending at no distant period to an open trade in corn. From the distress resulting to the manufacturers from this first attempt, the House might be called upon to consider of a similar alteration in the corn trade. He thought that, if the intentions of government bore that way, the more manly course would have been to begin with the corn trade. For his own part, he must oppose any proposition like that of a free trade of corn. As long as the national debt remained, no such thing could be listened to. The country could not support that competition and its present burthens together. He would be as glad as any to see low prices, but high prices there must be. The prices must be kept up by an import duty, amounting to an absolute prohibition, so long as the interest of the national debt was to be paid.

Mr. *Ellice* said, that the hon. baronet was certainly right in considering this measure as the outwork of an attack on the Corn laws. If the principle of freedom was to be applied to other trades, it ought to be applied to the trade in corn.

With respect to the case of the silk manufacturers, a great uncertainty prevailed in the public mind upon that subject. He intended shortly to move to have all the petitions referred to a committee. Much useful light had already been thrown on this subject, and much more might be expected. It was the opinion of persons who had the best continental intelligence, that unless there was a great improvement in machinery, and a great reduction in the price of corn, they could not proceed with this bill, without throwing out of employment the great mass of people engaged in the trade. Whether that trade could be built up again, was another question; but the present ruinous effect was clearly contemplated. The bill had, notwithstanding, one good effect. It had induced the silk manufacturers to institute a full inquiry into the state of their trade, and the result was a conviction on their part, that the foreign competition would prove ruinous to the home manufacturer.

Mr. *Baring* said, he had never encouraged this particular measure respecting silk: on the contrary, he was almost the only person who had raised his voice against it from the outset. Still it was rather hard, he must admit, to throw the whole responsibility of the bill upon ministers, since it had passed through the House with almost unanimous approbation. He was old enough to know, that those measures were not always the best and wisest which received the readiest acquiescence of that House.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, he never intended to intimate that his hon. friend had supported this particular measure. All he meant to state was, that the opening of the colonial trade, and the removal of the duty on the raw material, had his hon. friend's approbation.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Corn Laws.] Mr. *Baring* said, he understood, that a gentleman had lately returned from the Continent, who had been abroad during the whole of last year, under instructions from his majesty's government to collect information on the state of the foreign corn trade. He was anxious to know if that gentleman had made any report upon the subject, and if so, whether and when it would be presented.

Mr. *Huskisson* had no difficulty in stating, that the individual alluded to had been sent from this country with instructions from government, to obtain information respecting the corn trade of those countries in Europe from which England imported grain. He had returned, after making all the necessary inquiries, and a very few days ago had put into his hands, a report of great extent. It contained 150 folio pages, together with a voluminous appendix. As yet he had been unable to read the report. As far as he knew of it, however, he had no reason to think that the gentleman had not obeyed his instructions; and if this should continue to be his opinion after a perusal of the report, he knew of nothing which ought to prevent its being laid before parliament.

Bank of England Balances, &c.] Mr. *Grenfell* said, that although the accounts for which he was about to move were generally granted without opposition, he hoped, under the particular circumstances of the times, that he should be allowed a brief explanation of his views as connected with them. The accounts referred first to the balances lodged by the government, for the public, in the Bank; and next, to the charges for the management of the public debt, and other services performed by the Bank for the public. It was, perhaps, in the recollection of those who now heard him, that when he had first called the attention of parliament to the affairs of the Bank, the production of these accounts was resisted, not only by that corporation, but by the then chancellor of the Exchequer. After, however, a two or three years perseverance in calling for them, the resistance gave way, and on every successive year that he had since called for them, they were yielded without a struggle. It was thought by many, that the publicity which had been given to the transactions between the government and the Bank had been productive of public good. And, when he considered the approaching period of the expiration of the charter—a charter which he hoped and trusted would expire—he thought that, as the question between the Bank and the public was about to terminate, he should be allowed to say a few words for perhaps the last time, on the state of their affairs. The first class of accounts which he now called for related to the deposits of public money lodged in the Bank for current use, in the same manner as any gentleman kept his

cash account at his private banker's. He remembered that, at one time, the average amount of the public balance so placed for ten or twelve years amounted to no less a sum than eleven or twelve millions a year. Of late years this amount had, it was true, considerably decreased. In 1821, it was diminished to 3,900,000*l.* In 1822, to 4,200,000*l.* In 1823, to 5,200,000*l.* In 1824, to 7,200,000*l.* He was quite sure, that no practical man at all conversant with the value of these lodgments, would deny the advantage which they must confer upon the Bank; and he must repeat what he had often asserted, that the nature of the service performed by the Bank for the public, as compared with the profits accruing from the use of such large deposits, was so trifling, as hardly to admit of calculation in any proper settlement of these transactions. It was right to call the public attention to this circumstance; for when the period arrived of the expiration of the Bank charter, it would be for the government to consider what bargain it would renew for the transaction of the public business with the present Bank (for he thought it would still be preferable to deal with them); or whether a second bank on a large scale would agree to give the public a participation in the profits arising from the heavy balances in hand, and take such a sum as 10 or 20,000*l.* a year for the management of the national business. At all events, the public ought, whenever the bargain was again made, to receive a large participation in the profits derived from the use of so many millions of their own money. Let them consider how the public cash account stood at the Bank of England. The Bank had advanced 15,000,000*l.*, the whole of its capital, to the public, at 3 per cent interest, and this large premium they were receiving for the year 1824, while they actually were holders of nearly seven millions and a half of the money of that same public. Surely there ought to be a balance of mutual profit struck, under circumstances like these. The next subject that he wished to refer to was the allowance made by the public to the Bank for the management of the public debt. The trouble of this management consisted in the daily transfer of Stock, and the payment of the annual dividends to the public. It was due to the Bank to say, that the whole of this business was invariably performed with promptitude, exactness, and diligence; that, in fact, nothing could be better done; and there was only one complaint to be made respecting it, which was, that the price for the work was much too high. When the charter should expire, he hoped this matter would also be taken into consideration; indeed, on an equitable revision of this part of the bargain, the public ought to save 250,000*l.* The hon. member then concluded by moving for the said accounts.

Mr. *Pearse* said, he had no objection, on the part of the Bank, to the production of these accounts; but he would not, on the present occasion, go into the merits of the public bargain with the Bank, or the terms which ought to accompany the contingent respecting their charter. He hoped that important subject would in due time be gravely considered; not as it regarded the Bank itself, but as it would best serve the government and the country. They would at least come to the discussion with the full knowledge of the eminent services performed by the Bank for the public, when that corporation had stood in the gap, and effected what, upon emergencies, legislative interposition would have failed to accomplish. What the consequences to the public would be, if there were not such an establishment in existence in its chartered form, he would leave others to anticipate. As to the allowances to the Bank, it would be time enough to discuss their amount when the charter was under consideration; but really when the hon. gentleman thought proper to estimate the services performed by the Bank, he should not keep back the immense risks and losses which they incurred, in transacting the public business. On a late occasion they had lost by the forgeries of a single person above 250,000*l.*, and this, too, in the execution of the public business, and so contrived by the individual, that although the strictest inquiry was made into the conduct of the Bank clerks, in no single instance could negligence or impropriety be attributed to any one of them for it. There were other losses of the same character continually happening, which must be taken into the scale of estimating the advantages derived by the Bank from its connexion with the pecuniary business of the public. He regretted the allusions to the charter, and that the existence of it should be imputed as a matter of grave accusation to government. He hoped when the

proper time for discussion arrived, that gentlemen would not be governed by passion in their consideration of it, but be influenced by the principles of reason and sound sense.

Mr. *Hume* hoped, that the time had come when all those exclusive charters were to be abolished, by which the community at large always suffered for the gain of a few. Full of faults as was the paper lately sent by the government to the Bank, he entirely concurred in that passage of it which put an end to the hope of a renewal of the Bank charter. As the word "lottery" was introduced in the accounts called for, he was anxious to know how it had happened that the pledge given by the government two or three years ago for the extinction of lotteries in that year had not been fulfilled? It seemed to him that these lotteries were to be carried on perpetually; two of them were still advertised. How had this happened?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* replied, that on the subject of lotteries it was true, and he ought to take blame to himself that it was so, that when he had brought in his former bill, an adequate provision was not made for their speedier extinction. When he had moved the resolution in the year 1823, upon which the lottery bill was founded, he was not sufficiently aware of the mode in which these lotteries were practically conducted. It was never the custom, he had since ascertained, that they should be drawn in the same year, for the service of which they had been voted. The consequence was, that the lottery for one year spread over one or more future years, and hence arose the apparent inconsistency between the pledge he had given and the fact which the hon. member had stated, of the prolongation of these lotteries. There were now, however, only two of them remaining to be drawn, and these must be concluded within the present year, and he pledged himself that they should be the last.

Mr. *Robertson* condemned in the strongest terms the policy of government, in breaking down the old commercial system of the country, to make way for theoretical notions of a mischievous tendency. He alluded chiefly to the condition into which the silk trade had been thrown, and the manner in which government, whilst sweeping away other charters, were ready to set up a charter against that class of traders who deserved their encouragement.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. *Ellice* gave notice that on Thursday next, he would move for an account of all the issues of gold coin at the Bank from July 1823 to the 1st of February 1826. In 1823, he believed the 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes had been entirely withdrawn from circulation, and he meant to show what portion of the amount had been supplied by specie, for the purpose of exposing the fallacy which prevailed respecting the real quantity of cash required for the circulation of the country. There was a great deal of gold coin, it should be always remembered, which remained in the hands of bankers, without being issued at all in the manner supposed. He should move for these returns, that the House might be in possession of all the information of which the subject was susceptible. On the present occasion, he begged to move for a return of Bank notes in circulation on the 1st and 15th of each month, for six months, to the 1st of February inclusive, and the same return of Bank post bills.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer*, whilo he had no objection to the production of these returns, because, under existing circumstances, he thought a case was made out to call for them, begged to enter his protest against such motions being considered as mere matters of course. Neither the Bank nor the government opposed the production of these returns; protesting, however, against their consent being taken as a matter of course.

Mr. *Pearse* thanked the right hon. gentleman for the manner in which he had delivered the consent of the Bank; for certainly this information ought not always to be given as a matter of right. Indeed so impressed were the Bank proprietors of the injury to the public interests which might follow these constant disclosures of the state of the Bank affairs, that they had by large majorities refused to grant them in general courts. The directors were ready to give every necessary information; though he renewed their protest against its being called for as a matter of course.

Mr. *Monck* condemned this mystery on the part of the Bank of England, and preferred publicity as by far the better course, both for the Bank and the country. They had the example of the Bank of France in favour of the public inspection of such accounts, and it ought to encourage similar publicity in this country.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that the Bank proprietors might refuse to call for the accounts, from a confidence in their directors, but it did not follow that parliament should participate in the same confidence. He did not mean to say whether parliament confided, or did not, in that body, for he would decide on each case as it arose. With reference to the stoppage of the stamping of country bank notes, it was, on the part of ministers, a glaring violation of the existing law, and ought not to have been done without notice. Did the government mean to continue the instructions already sent to the board, to prevent the further stamping. If they did, he would tell the right hon. gentleman that the proceeding would cast such a discredit on the country bank notes, as to throw the local circulation in every corner of the kingdom into the greatest confusion. The effect would necessarily be, that the panic, which was said to be subsiding, must become perpetuated. There was no analogy between the mode of effecting this matter, and the regulating the duty on thrown silk; for, in the latter, the thing was cautiously done, and proper security was received from the parties. But was any security here taken for the loss of revenue which the country would suffer from stopping the stamping of country bank notes?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that government had been induced to send that order to the Stamp-office, that advantage might not be taken by the country bankers to get stamped an unusual quantity of notes; by which means the effect of the proposed measure would be forestalled. He did not intend to deny, that the issuing such an order might require an act of indemnity from parliament; but he trusted, when the necessity of the case was taken into consideration, that the House would not impute such a proceeding to any improper motive.

Mr. *Calcraft* did not mean to say, that ministers were actuated by improper motives; but he believed that in this, as in many other instances, they had committed a great error in judgment, and fallen into heavy mistakes. Why not have mentioned their intention? The parties would then have known their real situation? The ministers might rely upon it, that this harsh and abrupt measure would deteriorate the local currency, and keep alive the panic which they thought had subsided.

Mr. *Ellice* approved of the course adopted by government. If they had not stopped the stamping of country notes, the consequence would have been, that the country banks might have supplied themselves for a year to come, by which means the laudable intention of government would have been defeated. He granted that such a proceeding was illegal; but, in a case of so much importance, the duty of government was, to weigh what would be of the least inconvenience to the public; and, in his opinion, they had chosen the right course.

Mr. *Calcraft* was surprised at the lightness with which his hon. friend appeared to treat the subject. He supposed his hon. friend was not aware that every country bank had taken out and paid for a license, which entitled them to get notes stamped up to next October, under the sanction of an act of parliament. He was glad to see the right hon. gentleman treat the subject more seriously.

Mr. *Ellice* disclaimed having recommended the measure; but did not apprehend the same consequences from it as his hon. friend.

Mr. *Gordon* beheld the measure with great alarm. From the information which he had received from the country, he could add his testimony to what had been stated by his hon. friend, of the effect which it was likely to have in deteriorating the country bank notes. He regretted that government had taken, upon its own authority, to effect this object in so strong and unconstitutional a manner, without the previous interposition of parliament. He had heard of notes being sent up to be stamped, and which were expected back to meet previously formed engagements. Let the House contemplate the inconvenience which must follow from such a state of things. He hoped ministers would re-consider the matter before it was too late, or else the agricultural distress of 1821 and 1822 would return upon the country with redoubled force.

Mr. *Robertson* was no advocate for the banking system, but must condemn the measures which were in contemplation. After encouraging extensive circulation, it ill became ministers so abruptly to suspend it.

Mr. *Monck* thought the measure most salutary. In proposing it, government had not led, but followed, the public mind, which was unequivocally in favour of it. The injury done to the private bankers

was not so extensive as was represented; for, without any enactment on the subject, that species of circulation would have ceased to exist before the expiration of a year. Perhaps the measure in question might have been rendered unnecessary by a resolution, declaring that all notes issued since the 4th of February, should be recalled from circulation. In taking it, however, ministers were fully justified.

The motion was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, February 10.

BANK CHARTER, AND PROMISSORY NOTES ACTS.] On the order of the day for going into a committee on the above acts,

Lord *Folkestone*, before the Speaker left the chair, wished to have an opportunity of expressing what he felt as to the course now pursued. The question to be considered was one of great importance, upon which the House ought to have had some information beforehand. In his opinion, the right hon. gentleman had stolen rather an unfair march upon them. On the first day of the session he had given notice of a motion upon the subject generally, which was to come on at an early day. On a subsequent day, the right hon. gentleman had explained more fully that his motion would go to a consideration of the Bank charter acts in a committee of the whole House. On Monday last the right hon. gentleman came down, and moved that the acts respecting the Bank charter and promissory notes should be entered as read. They now passed at once to the order of the day for going into the committee. The objection which he had might appear technical only, but it comprised something very essential to the order of their proceedings. The House might be very willing and very right in agreeing to go into the committee; but, as the case stood, they had been led into an admission, which perhaps they might not have made upon a more regular discussion. He, for one, was not at all prepared for the discussion of the measures to be proposed in the committee. He was without that degree of information which was necessary. If, indeed, the right hon. mover would, on the question that the Speaker do leave the chair, detail his plan, and show clearly the nature of what he intended to propose in the committee, his objection would be obviated. But, if he required the House to go first of all into the committee, then would the House be treated most unfairly. And this was one of the inconveniencies arising from the practice which now prevailed of voting an address in answer to the speech on the first day of the sessions—that they found themselves pledged to the measures of government, in a degree which restrained them afterwards. He well remembered that several gentlemen protested against being pledged by that address to the support of the measures which might be proposed upon the various subjects to which it referred. This objection of his was not a mere matter of form, but a point of substantial importance. The House ought certainly to be in possession of what was intended to be brought, before they went into the committee; for it might turn out, that there was no reason for going into the committee at all.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the term used by the noble lord, that he had stolen a march on the House, could not be justly applied to him. That which he was now doing was the usual practice of the House. With regard to the notice of the motion, he had found that it was incorrectly expressed. The consequence was, that his intentions had been much misunderstood. He had moved that the House should resolve itself into a committee this day, to take into consideration the Bank Charter, and Promissory Notes Acts. He apprehended, supposing that some measures were by general admission necessary, that the only proper course was a discussion of the whole subject in a committee. Not the smallest idea was conveyed to his mind, that any gentleman would adopt a step which must thwart altogether, if persevered in, any measure of any description, however urgent the necessity for proceeding. Now that, and nothing less, would be the effect of the noble lord's objection. There would, in fact, under these circumstances, be no consideration of the Bank-charter acts. The objection would, in limine, stop the discussion, and frustrate the measures which he had to propose on the part of government. The course which he had taken was the usual course, and that which was the most convenient. He should, in all probability, be called upon to answer questions and explain matters of doubt, not once or

twice, but repeatedly. If he were driven to the course which the noble lord wished him to take, he must lay open his plan so as to meet all objections which would be brought against it, without any sufficient opportunity for clearing away such objections; as he would be precluded from addressing the House more than once.

Mr. *Baring* complained of the inexpediency of the mode adopted. If the statement which they so anxiously expected would meet the difficulties of the country according to the estimate formed of those difficulties by ministers, undoubtedly the right hon. gentleman was going to propose something upon a subject of the deepest importance, concerning which the House was called upon to deliberate with a total insufficiency of information. The course taken was only suitable to subjects of a common and obvious kind. If they were about to consult on a subject of the most insignificant nature, they could not proceed with greater levity: whereas this was a subject which should have been preceded by every possible means of intelligence. Many papers and documents ought to have been produced, some of which had been actually moved for no doubt with a view to their usefulness on this occasion. But, at the same time, so urgent was the whole subject, so sensitive was the whole country, so anxiously did they wish to know what the government were go ng to propose, that he could wish his noble friend to wave his objection. If they found themselves not to be in a condition to go on with the discussion they might report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Lord *Folkestone* said, his only wish was, that the House might know upon what they were to deliberate, before pledging themselves to deliberation. They ought to have the subject adequately explained; and his view was, that if not done before, at any rate it ought to have been done while the Speaker was in the chair. The effect of the present motion was, to pledge the House to an alteration of the Bank acts, without knowing that there was any necessity for alteration. However, as the feeling of the House was against the mode of proceeding which he proposed, he would not persevere in it.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, the noble lord was right in his objection to the course taken; but it would not have the effect of precluding objections to the plan. For one, he protested now against any alteration of the said acts, unless where ministers proved such alteration to be indispensably necessary.

The Speaker having left the chair,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* then rose. If, he said, he did not feel that he was acting in the discharge of a great public trust, however unworthily or unfortunately imposed on him, he should be appalled at the magnitude and importance, if not at the difficulty, of the subject on which he had now to address the House. He was well aware that much criticism would be applied, that many objections would be brought against him, both on the principle and the details of the measure which it would be his business to submit. He was well aware, that, notwithstanding the impression on his own mind was clear as to the real causes, and the proper remedy for the evils which had lately visited the country, he was likely to meet with no light hostility to his propositions. He perfectly understood the feelings which actuated the minds of some individuals on the agitation of topics of this nature; and to any observations which might flow from him in the course of this discussion, he was prepared to meet no small degree of misunderstanding, as to the principles and grounds on which he proposed to rest the projected measures. One source of reliance at least he found in himself: he came to this deliberation with a good conscience; and he hoped he might venture to ask the House for their gravest attention. He invoked their patience more particularly, because he felt a fear within himself, that he could not contrive to compress within those limits which the House usually expected its members to observe, the various parts of so intricate and interesting a subject. He entreated the indulgence of the House, therefore, to the extent of a patient hearing; not deprecating any hostile observations, in whatever spirit pronounced; but only asserting his claim to that forbearance and attention which the subject demanded, and without the exercise of which, it would be utterly impossible for him to discharge the duty which he owed to the government, to the House, and to the country.

Before he stated in detail the views of the government, or gave any exposition of the facts connected with the case, or the grounds of the measures which he had to propose, and which, according to the conviction of ministers, the best interests

of the people and the safety of the country required, he trusted he should be allowed to make a few observations, which he would not have made but for something which had fallen from various quarters, and which seemed to justify him in doing so. He was aware that one objection of a very general kind awaited him; namely, that it would have been more prudent and more advisable in all respects, if government had altogether abstained from making any decided allusions to the causes of the late general distress. He wished those who were of that sentiment would do him the favour to reflect on the situation in which ministers were placed, and to reflect, not only on their situation as to the present question, but also—which was a consideration of a thousand times more importance—on the situation in which the country was placed. If they had not taken this course, it would yet have been impossible for them to have refrained from some other mode of interference. If they had abstained, and had held themselves aloof, would they have been sure of silence in other parts of the House? Would many gentlemen, whom he now saw before him, have been silent? Would the public have been silent? Would ministers not have been loudly called upon to state explicitly, and distinctly, whether, considering the situation of the country, they meant to propose any new measures, and what those measures were? Good God, what answer could they give to these calls? Could they say that they would give no answer—that they would be silent? If they had adopted that course, they would have occasioned evils of much greater magnitude than any that could arise from the most complete publicity; they would have aggravated the feelings of public difficulty and distress, in a degree of which he did not wish to incur the responsibility. Whether their measures were right or wrong, it would be for parliament and the country to judge; but altogether silent respecting them, they could not have been. On that score they were entirely free from blame, and the objection, he conceived, was utterly unfounded.

In order that the House and the country might be able to form a proper judgment; first, whether any thing should be done to prevent the recurrence of those evils which had been viewed by all with such apprehension, and which had been, in fact, attended with incalculable misery and distress; and, secondly, whether the measures which his majesty's government had determined to bring under their consideration, were the most fitting and proper to produce the desired effect, it was, in his opinion, a matter of essential necessity that they should satisfy their minds as to the immediate causes of that particular evil to which they were about to apply a remedy. Because, if they did not set out with a clear understanding of the case in all its bearings—if they did not thoroughly understand the disease to which they were about to administer a cure—they would legislate in the dark—they would aggravate the distress, and create still greater mischiefs than any they had yet experienced, by fallaciously leading both themselves and others to the belief, that they were applying infallible remedies. Infallible, in his belief, they could not be: for no man, he hoped, would suppose he could flatter himself with any idea of applying any thoroughly effectual remedy to all the fluctuations of trade; the rise and fall of prices; or the ebb and flow of public and private confidence. It was manifest that in all societies, constituted like ours—in all great commercial countries, where activity, enterprise, and speculation, formed as it were the very elements of existence, there must be great and sudden changes—periods of long-continued prosperity, and seasons of temporary and trying adversity. All history produced instances of these extraordinary fluctuations in every country, which had applied itself to commercial pursuits. He could well understand how the argument arising out of that proposition could be turned against him, and how the very knowledge of the continual recurrence and universality of the evil should leave it to work out its own cure. What legislative measure, he knew it might be asked, could remedy that which seemed to be a natural consequence of situation; or why proceed upon the mistaken assumption, that you could check that which seemed to arise out of the nature of things? There did seem an inconsistency in this; but he thought he could reconcile it to that idea of our commercial situation which he wished to impress upon the House. In all countries, where refinement and civilization had made any progress, credit, as their necessary attendant, had introduced a currency, in some cases, decidedly or theoretically metallic, in others partly metallic and partly paper.

Take the first of these—a country, where the currency or circulating medium was either decidedly or theoretically metallic. In that country, he thought there could be no question that great fluctuations might take place from various causes, not difficult to be explained, both in trade and in prices. Suppose, that after many years of uninterrupted prosperity in agriculture, during which the prices of produce remained almost permanent, there should come, as they had seen in their own country, a succession of unfavourable seasons—and supposing still further, that the supply which might naturally be expected from other countries to fill up the deficiency, either by the state of the laws at the time affecting their intercourse, or by some peculiar circumstances in their own situation, could not be afforded. Would it not be allowed, that the prices of agricultural produce might, by a grade almost imperceptible, when they had once acquired this tendency to rise, reach a much higher remunerating return, than the farmer had been accustomed to receive? Might not, then, this increased benefit to be derived from the culture of the soil very probably tempt the application of new capital to the culture of a species of soil, which the price of agricultural produce would not have enabled the grower of corn to till before? This, he believed, would be allowed to be a very probable consequence of the increased demand: but, that very demand carried the matter still further. As the price of the produce of inferior lands must always regulate the price of that obtained from a superior soil, the holders of these better grounds were, from the increased demand, and greater remunerating price, tempted to extend their speculations, to increase their stock, to force their culture; and, as the speculations and extended operations of one class almost necessarily affected all other classes, by consuming an increased quantity of the produce of those classes, and a consequent drawing an addition of capital to forward their labours, it followed that the original speculation of the holder of land may have given a stimulus to, and have been the cause of, the speculations of all others, and have had a natural tendency to produce the speculation and over speculation which may ultimately prove the cause of great disasters. For although this unnatural state of things may continue for a space of time, the course of years brings round again the same series of favourable seasons, as they before had unfavourable, and then comes the termination of over-speculation. They knew—indeed sad experience could tell them—the enormous difference between the profits of agricultural produce at one time, and at another not very remote from the first. The effect of that difference of profit goes to throw those lands out of cultivation, which have been tilled in the time of high prices; and to render unavailing all the lavish expenditure which had been encouraged by the expectation of additional remuneration. The agriculturists were thrown back; those who had expended capital on all other speculations dependent upon them (and few were not in some degree dependent upon them) were thrown back along with them, and that fluctuation which had proved so ruinous became the inevitable consequence.

But, if these fluctuations were certainly incidental to a country whose circulation was exclusively metallic, they were still more likely to occur in a country like this, where the circulation was partly metallic and partly composed of paper convertible into metallic money. There was a facility given both to the borrower and the lender; the inevitable tendency of which was a quicker rise of prices; and, upon any reverse, to a more precipitate downfall. He repeated, that in a country so situated —and such was exactly the case of this country—whatever the legislature might do, it must still leave it exposed to the chances of these fluctuations. Nothing within even the omnipotence of parliament could prevent such fluctuations; its utmost efforts could only tend to moderate their effects. But, if that was the nature of the evil—for an evil in its results he must call it—if the evil was of such serious magnitude, it appeared very likely to be greatly aggravated, although not caused—he begged they would recollect the distinction; it would be aggravated in a high degree by the state of the circulating medium. For it appeared from all they had learned by experience, that when the circulation of a paper money was not confined to notes of a larger species than one or two pounds, the distress, whenever it did take place, was increased by the existence of that species of circulating medium, more than by any other, and the insecurity of those from whom it issued.

Gentlemen had said—and he believed those who knew a great deal about country banks, some of them, indeed, if he was

not mistaken, connected with such establishments—that they did not care a farthing for the power to issue one and two pound notes—that they were not of the slightest importance to them; and one hon. gentleman (Mr. H. Gurney) had even protested, that he was anxious to get rid of them—that he wished with all his heart there were no such things in circulation—that they were a positive nuisance—but that if the power to issue them was vested in every petty firm which might think proper to take upon itself the name of a bank, establishments of credit and respectability were obliged to send them forth, from the competition which was necessary for their protection. If, then, they were neither a source of profit, nor an object of necessity; and if they had a direct tendency to increase the circulating medium beyond the point it would be likely to reach without them, by the mode in which they operated upon the currency, affecting the exchanges, and rendering the Bank of England, and the country banks themselves, unable to meet their payments upon any sudden demand, or any extraordinary alarm, he thought they were still further to be deprecated, as directly controverting the tenor of the act of 1819; an act which no man could deny was passed, if ever any act in that House was, with the unanimous approbation of all the parties of which it was composed—an act which had been solemnly resolved upon, as the only measure which could enable the country to meet any future danger, by placing the circulating medium upon a permanent and stable footing. That those notes did counteract the tendency of that act was not to be disputed; still less was it to be insinuated by any man, that that act was not the result of the deliberate conviction of almost every individual of every party in that House. And if so, where was the new principle—where was the innovation—where was the departure from former practice—where was the new and untried theory which some gentlemen had accused ministers of wishing to press upon the House? Was it not merely carrying into more rapid practice the very system under which the country had flourished for ages? If they were to be met in that manner—if they were to be accused of new theories or visionary attempts—he would say, that it was the hon. gentlemen opposed to them who were the theorists. They were the speculative men who were opposed to that system, which, he declared to God, he considered of such absolute necessity for the well-being of the country, that he could not contemplate any derangement of it without the plea of the most overpowering necessity—a plea which should even then be received with the greatest caution. Let the House look how the state of things, in a country like this, and in such circumstances as they had lately witnessed, might be affected by the issue of these one pound notes from provincial banking establishments. Who, in the first place, were the persons among whom these notes were generally circulated? Why, the poorer classes of the community—those to whom the possession of a one pound note was comparative wealth. And when, from the scanty earnings of hard labour and persevering economy, they had amassed three or four pounds in that kind of money, in what could they lay by these savings of industry but in country bank notes? They had been told, and told truly, that the only circulating medium of whole districts were composed of these notes. In them, therefore, must the poor man trust for the relief against the evil hour—in them must he deposit his hopes. He must take paper; and what was the consequence? When, from over-speculation, or over-issues, or any other causes, an alarm or panic arose, who was the person first to press forward and secure his property? Why, the poor man. He hears of distrust—he hears of failures: and, was it not natural that he who had invested his little all—to him of an importance of which it would not be easy to form a conception—should be the first to press forward for the payment of his demands—the first to guard against consequences which would to him be absolute ruin. That very anxiety on the part of the poor man necessarily commenced a run on the banker. Example was contagious. Then came the holder of the five or ten pound notes. He says to himself, "what is the meaning of this? there must be something wrong here; there must be something rotten; I must take care of myself while I may." He follows the torrent; he increases the difficulty; he adds to the distrust; and thus they might trace the progress of a great portion of the late disastrous events. The man who did not entertain the least doubt of the solidity of his banker—who was not agitated by the busy speculations of the day, became influenced by the contagion of example;

and, though his superior information and more extended knowledge might prevent him from being the first to feel the distrust of credit, yet in the end he became unable to resist the temptation of grasping at that which further forbearance might endanger.

It did appear, therefore, that the power of issuing these notes was one great source of the insecurity of country bankers. Men placed in such situations, and liable to such influences, could not be said to hold their credit upon such permanent foundations as those who were not subjected to them. The absence of such a description of paper would add to their solidity; and though it might, in a slight degree, diminish their profits, it would save them from the consequences of such evils as they at present deplored. For it was not even in such relations, extensive as they might be, that the evil terminated—it was felt, in its re-action, by men of whose wealth and resources it was impossible to doubt—by men who fancied themselves beyond the reach of any thing short of a total convulsion of society. They, it was true, were not immediately dependant upon the effect of the issue of small notes; they were only to be affected by securities of a different description; but every man must know—indeed, it had been before every man's eyes—that the exposure of the small banks to chances such as he had described, eventually endangered the existence of banking establishments, who fancied themselves placed beyond the reach of the utmost violence of the storm, from whatever quarter it might be directed. He repeated, that the security of these, the security of all, required some remedy to be applied to the present circulation of one and two pound notes.

Was he, then, proposing any thing new? Would any man say, that the restriction of the paper issue was not necessary to the support of public credit? that it was not necessary to the welfare of our commerce, the prosperity of our manufacturers, the security of our speculations? Quite the contrary. Every man had confessed its propriety. What was the general law of the land? He knew quite well that sixty or seventy years ago the law of the land prohibited altogether the issue of these small notes. Not long after the reformation of the currency, which took place, he believed, in the year 1773, an act was passed to restrain the issue of notes under 20*s.* nominal value. This took place in the year 1775. In the year 1777, the legislature, not satisfied with what it had done two years before, and still asserting the public detriment which had arisen from the circulation of these small notes, always complaining of it as an evil, prohibited the issue of any bank-notes under 5*l.*; and this proposition was justified upon the ground, that the prevailing practice of issuing these notes tended to much inconvenience and embarrassment, and was not necessary for conducting the commercial concerns of the country. The act of 1777 was, however, temporary in its duration; but the same feeling of its necessity continuing, it was prolonged from time to time, until, in the year 1787, it was made perpetual. This constant feeling of the legislature was at least a pretty good proof, that those who had preceded them in conducting the affairs of the country, though called by some the wisest of their generation, and by others regarded as imbecile and absurd, were yet consistent in their notion, that the suppression of these small notes was essential for securing a useful circulating medium for the country.

When the Bank Restriction act of 1797 was passed, it was then quite clear, that unless the prohibition was withdrawn from the circulation of the smaller notes, the country would be altogether deprived of the means of carrying on its business. It was however clearly intended, that the suspension of the old law, which suppressed the small notes, should be always commensurate with the duration of the Bank Restriction act; and in the year 1819, when the Bank Restriction act was under discussion, were not then the strongest opinions pronounced, were not the united declarations of the parliament and of the whole country proclaimed, that as soon as possible cash payments should be restored on the ancient basis? They would also bear in mind, that the committee which had last sat upon the subject, composed as it was of men of different political opinions, entertaining adverse notions also upon the principles on which the currency ought to be governed—they would bear in mind, that in the very report, framed by men such as he had described, not one word could be shown, nor in the evidence on which it was founded, could a syllable be found, to establish the enunciation of an opinion, that the circulation of these small notes was a thing so necessary as it was now

asserted to be, for the agricultural interests of the country, for its commerce, or essential in any way for its real transactions. Not one word had escaped that committee to sanction the opinion, that the suspension of the old law ought to be made perpetual. He could not, therefore, have dreamt, that any gentleman would have taken the ground of opposition which was taken by some, to his proposition. It came upon him quite new and unexpected. When his right hon. friend (Mr. Peel) had brought in his bill, than which there never was a more important measure under discussion, or one which had been more ably considered in all its details—even then the parliament, in making provisions for the resumption of cash payments two years afterwards, namely, in 1825, never dreamt of the possibility of allowing the circulation of these notes for a series of years after the Bank were allowed, or compelled, to pay their notes in cash. With respect to the subsequent act of parliament, in 1822, which allowed the circulation of this class of small notes, he now confessed, as he had indeed admitted the other night, that he had always felt regret, and still did regret, at the step taken on that occasion by parliament, which had the effect of circulating these small notes for a greater length of time. But, notwithstanding that act, he would repeat that it was always understood in the different communications that had taken place between the government and the country bankers, and more particularly in those which had occurred on the subject of their making deposits, that though they the bankers objected throughout most positively, and in the strongest manner, to the deposit of stock, they dwelt with comparative indifference upon the value to themselves of the issue of these one and two pound notes. In fact, the great scope of their objection was to the plan of their being compelled to make the deposit to which he alluded, but absolutely nothing of stress was laid upon the privilege of the issue of small notes. So far as they were concerned, then, they could not now turn round and affect to set a prominent value upon that which they had, on all former occasions, treated so lightly.

As the law now stood, these notes might be issued till the year 1833. Was he proposing any new principle in his mode of dealing with the last act of parliament? He must deny that he was; for all he contemplated was, to revert earlier than the year 1833 to the system which was sanctioned and enacted in the year 1819, as the future basis on which the currency was to rest. Those, then, who were prepared to argue, that the circulation of these small notes was essential to the country, as the hon. member for Cricklade (Mr. Gordon) had done, and that the rents of the landed proprietors could not be paid without them, were driven to this position—if their arguments were right, they were bound not to stop with opposing his proposition, but to call for an eternal continuance of the circulation of these small notes. Then who would be the parties calling for a change? Not, as he had said before, the government, but those who, contrary to the repeatedly established principle, demanded a perpetual duration of a different sort of currency. He confessed he was quite astonished at what had fallen from his hon. friend, when he talked of the connexion between rents and these notes: he wondered what new light had broken in upon him: he was quite surprised to learn whence the flash came, for no ray to form it had sparkled in any of their previous discussions. His firm belief was, that, so far from the continuance of this species of circulation assisting in the maintenance of the country gentleman's rent-roll, it would bring ruin upon it if unfortunately it was perpetuated.

It was very possible, however, that the argument to which he alluded might not be pushed to its extremity by all the gentlemen who were opposed to his plan, but that other opponents would be found, who would say, "You ought not to press this plan of yours, on account of the great difficulty that must attend its execution—on account of the manner in which it must practically cramp your circulation, lower the price of produce, and produce embarrassments, which must affect your agriculture, and your commerce, and paralyze the industry of the people." Now, he would reply, that these apprehensions, alarming as they sounded, were, nevertheless, of the most visionary kind. Indeed, the experience which could be quoted against it was decisive of the argument; for in the year 1819, it became indispensably necessary for the Bank of England to take immediate measures to meet the operation of the then approaching law, which provided, within a short period, for the payment of their notes in

cash on demand. The only obvious mode which they could take was, as speedily as possible, to contract their issues, so as to bring the foreign exchanges, which were running against this country, round to a more favourable point, thus to lower the price of gold, and then to bring it into the market, and keep it there. He would state how the measures of the Bank were brought into action. It appeared that since the year 1819, there was coined at the Mint a sum not less than 25,236,000 sovereigns, and he would give the periods when this coinage took place; from which it would be seen, that a very large proportion of it was in the three years that immediately succeeded the passing of the act of 1819, which compelled the Bank to take necessary steps to resume cash payments. In the year 1820, there was coined at the Mint, 949,516; in 1821, 9,520,758; in 1822, 5,356,787. So that in three years, the Bank had succeeded, in the first place, in righting the foreign exchanges, in the next, in reducing the price of gold, and in the third year, in having coined fifteen millions of sovereigns. This was the process which was conducted by the Bank. He did not mean to say that it was throughout unattended with distress. In the year 1819, considerable distress certainly prevailed, and also in 1820; again in 1821; but still, upon turning to the prices of commodities, which indicated more activity in trade, and greater capacity in the people to purchase, they would find that, in 1822, notwithstanding this mighty operation respecting the currency, things had greatly mended; and this was apparent, while the paper of the country banks and of the Bank of England had become greatly diminished—the latter necessarily, for otherwise they could not have carried their contemplated measures into effect. This diminution was apparent from the following returns of the Bank circulation within the period he had mentioned. In the year 1820, the Bank paper circulation was 23,875,000*l.*; in 1821, 21,759,000*l.*; and in 1822, 18,000,000*l.*, when the pressure was less than in the two preceding years, notwithstanding this reduction of the circulating medium. No doubt the paper withdrawn by the Bank was, in some degree, supplied by the gold, for which it had been exchanged; but after that substitution, did things fall down, and was every man looking at his neighbour and asking, "What is your condition, how long can you bear up against this depression? How long can I myself endure its operation?" No such want of confidence prevailed—no such interrogatories were interchanged. On the contrary, every thing went on smoothly and advantageously—a clear proof, in his mind, that the formidable danger apprehended by some, from the substitution of gold for the one and two pound notes, was most exaggerated, and that by far too much importance was attached to the operation of that process.

Still it might be said, that however practical might be the convertibility of this paper circulation into specie, it was an operation of such magnitude, as could not be carried into effect, without a great pressure upon the existing interests and demands of the country. Now, to a certain degree he was quite ready to admit that these apprehensions were not groundless. Some interests must always suffer in these important arrangements; but to estimate the nature of the operation, they must look a little at the actual state of the gold at present in circulation; and how far they were in a condition to substitute the necessary quantity of gold for the country Bank paper to be withdrawn. In making this calculation, they must always consider, that the present case was not like that of 1819, in which the basis of the metallic circulation had to be laid. And that consideration naturally suggested the lesser difficulty which must attend the enlargement of a basis already formed, as compared with the work of its original formation. It was one thing to lay the foundation, and another to raise a superstructure upon a basis already formed. The quantity of gold in the country could not be less than 17,000,000*l.* upon any reasonable calculation. The gold coined at the Mint amounted, in the manner he had mentioned, to 25,236,000*l.* There had been, within the same period, exported of British gold, 7,269,000*l.*: what part of that sum consisted of coin it was difficult to say, as no returns of that nature were presented at the Customs. However, it was a notorious fact, that within the last half year the foreign exchanges had become favourable, and a proportion of the gold so exported, not in ingots, but in the real gold coin of the realm, had come back to the amount of 1,000,000*l.* sterling: so that, subtracting this 1,000,000*l.* so returned from the 7,000,000*l.* exported

the total loss upon the export of gold might be taken at 6,000,000*l*. Deduct this from the 25,000,000*l*. and 19,000,000*l*. would remain for the uses of the country. But, as it was possible, that some coin, of which no accurate returns could be made, must have gone abroad in the pockets of individuals, and also in the payments of specie in carrying on a trade which he and his right hon. friend near him (Mr. Huskisson) were so anxious to put down, if he estimated these at 2,000,000*l*., it would still leave no less than 17,000,000*l*. of gold available for the country at the present moment. The exchanges were now so favourable as to prevent any of this stock in specie from going out; and it was, in point of fact, profitable to import gold into England.

Taking this general estimate into view, the committee would see, that they had a pretty large basis to superinduce their more enlarged structure upon. They had a solid ground to work on; and if they then turned to the state of their paper currency, they would see with tolerable accuracy, the nature of what they would be required to perform. What, then, had they to look to as far as related to their paper currency, and contemplating the amount of gold, which, in the course of three years (the time to which he meant to restrict the circulation of the one and two pound notes), it might be necessary to employ to fill up the vacuum which must arise from the withdrawal of the small Bank notes from the national circulation. There was some difficulty in ascertaining with any positive accuracy the amount of country bank paper now in circulation, but they could approximate to a conjecture or estimate on which they could safely act. And here he spoke not of the general aggregate paper circulation of the country, but merely of that of the notes of smaller denomination. Estimating, then, from the Stamp-office the number of these notes which were stamped from the years 1820 to 1825 inclusive, and this while the Bank of England was withdrawing its small paper currency, he found that in January, 1821, the amount was 1,683,000*l*. in January, 1822, 2,214,000*l*.; in January, 1823, 1,888,000*l*.; in January, 1824, 1,969,000*l*.; in January, 1825, 2,501,000*l*.; and up to the 5th of January, 1826, 3,172,000*l*. He believed that if they estimated the amount of the country bank paper in circulation by trebling the amount stamped in one year, they would greatly overrate it. The fairest way, as it seemed to him, would be, to take the average amount stamped in any three years, and calculate the circulation at treble that amount. Taking, then, the amount of three years, he would call the average 2,300,000*l*., or estimate the small note circulation for 1825 at six millions; but, although he was willing to admit that that might have been the amount of the small note currency during the greater portion of that year, there could at the present moment be no doubt that the amount had been recently considerably reduced, particularly from the events which had occurred during the latter half of the year, beginning indeed so early as last July, when, owing to the interposition of some difficulty by a Bristol banker, in the payment of a one pound note in specie, a considerable sensation of uneasiness on one side was created, and of caution on the other — he meant that prudential caution, on the part of solid and solvent bankers, who foresaw, that in such a state of things, it was desirable to control their issues judiciously, and who evinced an unwillingness to go beyond the amount which a provident view of their affairs would warrant, and in fact, made silent arrangements for the gradually withdrawing the small notes which they had issued. When great apprehension became afterwards more general, though not in contemplation of any intention of the government to alter the law, but because these notes were found to have been issued by country bankers to a greater amount than they ought to have been, the consequence was a re-action, before which some bankers failed, and the convulsion of public credit in its turn affected the confidence of the solid and solvent bankers. These latter bankers, therefore, immediately controlled, as well as they could, their issues. Referring again to what had taken place in the committee of 1819, they should remember, that the solvent bankers were in the habit of cautiously guarding their issues of 1*l*. and 2*l*. notes; for it appeared, that they were in the practice of having a great number of the newly stamped ones by them, and not putting them into circulation, until the old ones were called in, for which they were to be substituted. Supposing that in 1825, 6,000,000*l*. was the total amount of these notes in circulation, the number now must be greatly less, and could not be estimated at much more than 4,000,000*l*.

In this view, the utmost effect of the operation of his proposition in the course of the next three years, would be to supply that vacuum with gold to an equal amount. Now, if he was at all right in supposing — what nobody could, he thought, question—that in the years 1824 and 1825 a greater abundance of this paper was in circulation than was consistent with the stability of the currency, it of course followed, that the years 1822 and 1823 were much safer times; the quantity not then being at so high a rate. He conceived, therefore, that all the notions which prevailed of the difficulties and obstacles that must, it was said, attend the filling up of this paper vacuum, would be found in the end visionary and groundless. Surely, they were not to be terrified by the conjecture of dangers, when they had a great public object of admitted benefit to pursue. Were they to startle at the mere sound of difficulties? Were they afraid to look their situation in the face? Were they so pusillanimous, because their path might have difficulties, to refrain from treading in it, and to leave things as they were, blinking the whole danger, for fear of meeting those apprehensions which wavering minds might suggest? Instead of doing so, he implored the House to brave this imaginary danger; and as they must take sound principles for their rule of action, to take them in a time of peace, when sound principles were, if they were worth a farthing, proper to be acted upon; and not postpone their trial till a less favourable moment, when dangers might thicken upon them, and when success was less attainable.

Something had been said, in the course of these discussions, with respect to other causes which had contributed to that excess of paper circulation in the years 1824 and 1825, to the circumstances which had carried off a portion of the gold previously imported, and to other matters, the tendency of which was said to aggravate the pressure of the times. It was further said, that the panic was not at an end, and that it must still be the lot of the country to bear up against great difficulties. He would not deny the existence of those difficulties, though he could not think them of that permanent character that others did. He knew that there were other causes alluded to, besides the excess of paper currency, arising out of various measures adopted by the Bank of England, some of them adopted on their own account, and for which they were alone responsible and others with the direct concurrence, and in furtherance of the object, of government. In looking at the Bank circulation, as it appeared from papers which had been just laid on the table, the average amount of Bank of England notes in circulation in 1823 was 19,137,492*l.* The country banks, in the same year, maintained much the same circulation as they did in the preceding one. In the year 1824, the Bank of England circulation was 20,616,010*l.*; but in 1825, it fell to 19,751,015*l.* The considerable increase which was apparent in 1824, was partly charged as creating the difficulties which it was asserted belonged to an over issue of paper, and the turning of the exchanges against this country; for the bank circulation and the country circulation were assumed as having a concurrent operation. Now, it by no means followed, that the paper issue by the Bank had, as was supposed, that effect on the foreign exchanges which was attributed to it, for that year; because, it would be found, on a reference to facts, that there was an impossibility of assuming any direct relationship between the amount of Bank of England notes in circulation, and those of the country banks; for, singularly enough for such calculation, it frequently happened when the former were great, the latter bore no relative proportion in magnitude, and vice versâ; and what was supposed to be an existing connexion between them was erroneous.

But, it was supposed, that assuming this increase to have taken place, it was owing to the arrangements between the Bank and the government. So far as regarded the arrangement for the advance on the half-pay and pension list, and the payment of the 4 per cent dissentients, it might or it might not be true, that those arrangements had led to an increase of the Bank issues; and he now spoke of that circumstance, without reference to the Bank advance upon mortgages, which was about 1,200,000*l.* Still, the arrangement alluded to between the Bank and the government could not, upon a fair comparison of all the circumstances, have raised the amount of Bank issues more than 200,000*l.* or 300,000*l.*, comparing the years 1824 and 1825, and including the effect of the mortgage advance. So that the arrangement alluded to could not

in itself have caused that excessive issue of paper. In making these remarks, he begged not to be understood as having the slightest wish that the government should screen itself, by throwing any blame on the Bank which it ought to bear, or by skulking under any miserable shifting of responsibility from one side to the other; for if the government had done wrong, it ought to abide the consequences. Nor would he stop now to enter into a laboured vindication of measures unconnected with the present question. Let the thing be examined; and, if its principles were found erroneous, let them profit by the example, and hereafter abandon the precedent. If he could but flatter himself that the government had acted rightly, then he could have no motive for wishing to retrace his steps. If, on the contrary, that his course had been erroneous, let them do what they pleased in adverting upon it, and make him the object of their censure. This was, after all, so insignificant a subject of inquiry as compared with the great object to which they ought at present to apply themselves, that he would not weary the House by going into details which were so irrelevant. If government had done the mischief complained of, let the parliament take care it should not be done again. It was the business of the legislature to prevent a repetition of error.

He had gone into a greater length of discussion upon principles, than he had at first intended; but he had been led into it from an understanding that it was upon these principles that the more serious ground in dispute would be taken. He would now proceed as shortly as he could to detail the plans by which the government proposed to effect the withdrawing of the small notes from circulation, and making the basis of the currency safer and more solid for the public. There were two modes by which this alteration could be carried into effect. The one was by at once declaring, that no small notes should be circulated after a given period. The other was by permitting those already in circulation to run their course, and allow no new ones to be issued; at the same time assigning a positive cessation to their currency. The first mode appeared undoubtedly liable to this great objection—that at the end of three years, (taking that as the time of cessation), the country would be left in a state extremely embarrassing and inconvenient for the execution of the plan itself. This must be obvious; for if, during these three years, the country banks could accumulate their stamps at will, then there would be the same difficulty in carrying into effect the main object as was now interposed, and could again, ad infinitum, be urged against it. The most proper, the most effective, and at the same time not inconveniently expeditious mode, would be to adopt the plan already communicated; which was, that no new small notes should be issued from the opening of the present session of parliament, or any of those now in existence, be allowed to remain in circulation after the end of three years from that time. The resolution, therefore, which he had to submit to the House, and on which the bill that would be subsequently introduced would be founded, was, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that all promissory notes payable to the bearer on demand, issued by licensed bankers in England, or by the Bank of England, for any sum less than *5l.* bearing a date previous to the 5th of February 1826, or which may have been stamped previously to that day, shall and may continue to be issued, re-issued, and circulated, until the 5th of April 1829, and no longer."

The principle of this resolution would refer solely to England, and the measure founded upon it would contain a clause to that effect. As to the particular details of this plan, he did not know that at present, he had any thing further to state. It was, however, important to inform the House what was intended with respect to the future application of this principle to other parts of the united kingdom. He had been asked the other evening by a noble lord (Archibald Hamilton), what measure he intended to propose with respect to Scotland, as to this extension of the banking system: and he had been asked a similar question as to Ireland. He had not gone into any detailed explanation on either point; because he thought the whole ought to be given at one and the same time. It was well known that the general law on the subject of banks was different in Scotland and Ireland from what it was in England. In Scotland this difference existed since the year 1777. Before the year 1765, there existed no prohibition there as to notes under *5l.*, but in that year an act passed prohibiting the issue of notes under 20 shillings. This continued in force till the

year 1785, when it was repealed, and the issue of notes under 20 shillings allowed, and no general restriction took place, as to the issue of notes of any description under 5*l.* In Ireland it was generally the same as to the circulation of small notes; except in some parts of the north of that country, where there was a particular objection to small notes, and where, being refused as payments for rent, their circulation was opposed, and gold was in more general use; but, in the other parts of that country, paper was the general circulating medium. In the year 1799, the Irish parliament adopted a principle the very opposite to that which was followed by this country after the restriction of cash payments; for an act was passed there prohibiting the issue of small notes, while they were allowed with us; and one effect of that act was, to keep gold in circulation there for a longer period than it remained with us. But, in the year 1804, an act was passed, assimilating the laws on the subject of paper issues in both countries, and they had since continued the same. It should be observed, that the whole system of banking in Scotland was quite different from that in England. In the first place, there was no restriction to the establishment of banks, as far as respected the number of partners. There were three chartered banking companies in that country, but none of them had any exclusive privilege: there were in them very many partners, each of whom was liable to the amount of his shares; but they possessed no exclusive privilege. In Ireland, in the year 1822, an alteration took place in the law respecting banks, as far as related to that part of the privileges of the Bank of Ireland which prevented the establishment of other banks with more than six partners, and banks of that description were allowed to be established; but at distances not less than fifty miles from Dublin. Now, supposing that an issue of small notes was not to be allowed as a permanent system, he could not see, in reference to such a system, the grounds why Scotland and Ireland should not be put on the same footing as England; and though it might not be advisable to make such an alteration at the present moment, yet, as a prospective regulation intended to be permanent, he did not see why a difference should be allowed to remain between one part of the united kingdom and the other [hear, hear]—giving, however, a sufficient time, by naming a period during which the change in the system might be effected. At the present moment, the circulation of Scotland was exclusively paper, and in Ireland it was almost entirely so; and in neither had it its basis in a metallic currency: it would therefore be evident, that such a plan as that now before the committee could not be made applicable to either of those countries, at the present period. It was not his intention on this occasion to submit any specific resolution on this part of the subject. He would, however, take an early occasion of calling the attention of the House to it; and then he would state in detail his reasons for any alteration. But he must confess, whenever the permanent system might be proposed, that he could see no grounds for having different parts of the kingdom placed on a different footing.

He was not aware that he had any thing else to offer to the committee on the general question, except a word as to what had fallen the other evening from the hon. member for Cricklade. That hon. member had said, that he could not consent to a restriction of the issue of one pound notes, because he felt convinced that it would have an effect extremely injurious to the landed interest; and he had called upon the country gentlemen, in their own defence, to come forward as a body to defeat the plan. No doubt the hon. member stated correctly what were his own sentiments on this question; but, with every respect for him, he must say, that he had not given the subject due consideration; for he would contend, that if there was any class of persons in the country more interested than another in preventing the circulation of small notes, it was the country gentlemen. Now, he would ask any man who had lately had an opportunity of witnessing the scenes that had taken place in some of our small towns, where crowds were seen daily running to the country banks to procure an exchange of their one and two pound notes for gold, or Bank of England notes—he would ask any such man of property, what security he could have for the payment of his rents? And a great deal of this panic was about the period of rent-day. He would ask him, what security he had, that his own tenants were not, to a considerable extent, the holders of such notes? What security he had, that they might not suffer. Or what security he had, that he could get any rent at all? It was one of

the evils of the small note system, that an alarm among the holders of one and two pound notes (and they were, for the greater part, of that class who were most likely to be affected with sudden panic, without ever considering whether it was well or ill founded) was calculated to excite fears respecting the security of the larger notes; and thus it frequently happened, that a sudden run was made on banks for the payment of their larger notes in gold, or Bank of England paper, the security for which was otherwise as firm as that of the Bank of England. From such causes as this, many most respectable houses had been obliged to suspend their payments, with more than assets (though not at the moment available) to meet all demands on them. It was, he thought, and he said it with great respect for those who held the contrary opinion, almost absurd to suppose that the interests of the country gentlemen could be upheld by an unrestricted issue of small notes, or that the restriction of such issues in the way he proposed, would be attended with effects injurious to those interests. The country gentlemen were, he thought, bound to support the present proposition. They would be running blind to their true interests in opposing a measure calculated to benefit themselves and every other class of the community.

He would now beg to call the attention of the committee to the second part of this subject. He meant the propriety of limiting the exclusive privileges of the Bank of England, so far as to allow the establishment of private banks with more than six partners. He confessed, when this measure was first suggested as one which would considerably tend to the relief of the country, he did not expect any serious objection to it; as he did not see how the concession could act injuriously to the interests of the Bank. When the Bank of Ireland was, in 1822, requested to concede a part of its privileges, for the attainment of an object similar to that now proposed, it did not seem to be considered by that body, that the concession would be injurious. On the contrary, it was looked upon rather as a source of greater security to all parties. This was the general impression in that country; and, indeed, so greatly did that feeling extend among the members connected with Ireland, that when, in the last year, a bill was introduced for the purpose of giving greater efficacy to the former measure, it had been his endeavour to prevent gentlemen from carrying the principle further than was intended by the act of 1822. He was afraid, lest, seeing the advantage that had already arisen from the plan, speculation might be carried on by it, so far as to curtail the privileges of the Bank of Ireland, more than had been contemplated and agreed upon, when the privilege was first conceded. It was clear, from what he had stated, that the concession on the part of the Bank of Ireland had been productive of considerable advantage; and he confessed he did not see why the same principle should not be extended to this country. In Scotland, the principle had been long in operation, and the effect there was, that the bank-failures were unknown.

It might be said, that this plan would not prevent speculation to any great extent, or be an effectual check to over-issues. He did not say it would; but he contended, that the issues would be rendered more secure by a species of banking conformable to that in Scotland. He knew it was objected, that the mere permission to have more partners than six in a bank would not necessarily cause more than that number to associate as partners in one concern, for that though six partners were allowed, yet, in the great majority of banks, the number of partners did not exceed three or four. That might be true. He knew there was no magic in the number six. Six partners might be too many for some purposes, as it would be too few for others. All he contended for was, that there should be an opportunity, by an extension of partners, in cases where it was required, to give that security, the benefits of which had been so much felt in Scotland. He saw nothing in the number six, or in any other particular number. He merely wished the power of extending the number, where such extension would be useful. He had already stated, that the effect of the extension of the Bank privilege, as to the number of partners to private banks, had been productive of great benefit. Since the passing of the act of 1822, the greater part of the banking business of that country had been carried on by banks of that description. In one establishment the number of partners was sixty or seventy, and in the provincial bank the number was even larger; and it was admitted, that the business was conducted in a prudent and satisfactory manner, which gave confidence and security to those who had trusted

their deposits with them, and to those who had availed themselves of the notes they issued.

He would now observe, that though he would move a resolution declaring the utility of such establishments in England, it was not his intention to propose a bill on the subject to that House. It was the intention of government, that a bill should be introduced for the purpose, but it was deemed advisable that it should originate in the other House. Of course, it would be for this House to reject or adopt it when it came down; but it was considered a matter of public convenience that it should originate as he had stated. He had been asked the other evening, whether, if this measure should be adopted by the House, ministers had fixed any time when it might be carried into execution—that was, whether any period would be fixed, before which it would not be competent for any of the new partnerships to commence their issues of notes? And it was thrown out, that sufficient time should be given, for the purpose of allowing the present bankers to connect themselves together in new partnerships, or adopt other plans for their future regulation. He would now say, that he did not see any inconvenience which could arise to existing interests, from the immediate establishment of the proposed banks; or from an immediate grant of permission to establish themselves. He could not perceive what any existing respectable bank of good credit, and conducting its business on a solid basis, could have to fear from an immediate permission for the establishment of the new banks, and therefore he should be reluctant to postpone their operation to any distant day. To him it appeared, that the apprehensions entertained on this ground were altogether without foundation, and on that ground it would not be thought advisable to protract the new plan to any remote period. It would, however, be obvious, that in the nature of things, some considerable time must elapse before the plan could be put in practice. He therefore had no objection to fix the 5th of next July, as the period before which it should not be competent to any of the new companies to issue their notes. This he thought would be going as far as was necessary to the general security of the present establishments, or to the practical management of those proposed.

He was not aware that it was necessary for him then to go into any further detail on the subject. If there was any part of his propositions in which he had not made himself clearly understood, he should be happy to answer any questions, or give any explanation in his power. Having given this detail of his plan, he must say, that if the House should refuse to entertain it, or, having entertained it, should negative its enactment as a legislative measure, it would be giving countenance to a serious evil, by leaving the country at all times exposed to those fluctuations in credit and confidence, the effects of which had, on a recent occasion, been productive of so much distress—to an evil which must become greater every day that its remedy was delayed—to an evil which, unless parliament interfered, would give encouragement to speculations of the most dangerous kind. The system to which he now proposed a remedy had already given encouragement to many such speculations, and though a great portion of the recent speculations had arisen from causes over which parliament had no control, yet they were greatly aggravated by imprudent issues of notes from many private banks. Whatever might be the result of the present motion, he should feel satisfied that in proposing it he had done his duty fairly. The rejection of it he should consider as a step fraught with great danger to the country. Should the House reject this measure, he would not envy any man who might have to fill the situation which he had then the honour to hold, the responsibility that must attach to him, in endeavouring to struggle against difficulties which must daily increase on him, from the present system, in proportion as some efficient remedy was delayed. The only remedy which, in his view of the case, would meet the evil he had now explained to the House. It would be their duty not to blink the question—not to imagine, that by deferring any remedy, the evil would of itself pass away. They must meet it boldly, and if they did, they would show to the country that they possessed the means by which it might be remedied. By coming boldly to the discussion of that remedy, it would be seen that the difficulties of the plan which he had suggested had been considerably overrated, and that the fears of the country bankers had been carried to an extravagant length. And when he mentioned the country bankers, let him not be misunderstood. He condemned the law under which they

acted, but he did not condemn them. It was to the system, and not to the men, that he alluded; and it was that system which he was anxious to alter. As to the individuals connected with the present private banks, he believed firmly that generally they were entitled to the highest praise for honour, integrity, and stability. It was the system under which they acted, that produced the evil; and he felt convinced, that the alteration in that law which he now submitted to the committee would not have the effect of shaking that confidence which the country was disposed to place in them. He would now move,

"That it is the opinion of this committee, that all Promissory Notes payable to bearer on demand, issued by licensed Bankers in England, or by the Bank of England, for any sum less than 5*l.*, bearing a date previous to the 5th of February 1826, or which may have been stamped previously to that day, shall and may continue to be issued, re-issued, and circulated, until the 5th day of April 1829, and no longer."

Mr. *Baring* rose to address the committee. He said he wished to preface the observations which it would be his duty to make, by requesting of the right hon. gentleman to state whether the resolution which he had just read was the only one which he meant to submit to the House.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* replied, that he had no other resolution to propose on that specific part of the question.

Mr. *Baring* said, that if that was the case, the resolution before the committee did nothing at all. It went only to say, that all the small notes now in circulation should continue to circulate till the year 1829, and no longer; but it made no provision for any new notes which might be issued in the interim. There was no objection, he supposed, that the small notes now in existence should continue to circulate till 1829; but not a word was said about any new notes that might be issued between this and that period. This, he thought, was a point on which the right hon. gentleman ought not to have omitted to touch. The right hon. gentleman had deprecated any observations as to the time when this matter was introduced by government. He could not see why this should be so. His majesty's ministers, instead of excusing themselves for the introduction of this measure now, were rather to be blamed for not having called parliament together sooner, for the purpose of devising some remedy. The right hon. gentleman seemed to expect some hostility to his measures from the opposition side of the House.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* begged to assure the hon. gentleman, that he did not allude to any opposition as that of party, but he deprecated such opposition as that which he had been led to expect from the remarks of one or two hon. members on a former evening.

Mr. *Baring* observed, that opposition as a party, was at present that which the right hon. gentleman had no cause to apprehend. If there was any one thing on which the country might congratulate itself in the present period of difficulty, it was that of the absence of all party feeling from discussions of public affairs. The present practice was very different from what they had seen on former occasions—on the treaty with France, the Irish question, and other subjects, where a strong opposition was made from his side of the House to the measures of government; but at no period of modern times was there less of party feeling evinced in the discussion of matters proposed by ministers; and he was certain that, if the right hon. gentleman was not at present convinced of that fact, he would be so before the conclusion of the present session. There might be some gentlemen in the House who were disposed to legislate for our present difficulties on the pure principles of political economy; some whose remedies would have reference to the protection of the agricultural interests; some who would look chiefly to the commercial, and others to the banking, interests; but he did not believe that there were any who would offer a remedy for the evils under which we suffered, with a view to party purposes. The country was at present in too enlightened a state to allow its distresses to be made a handle for party purposes. At the same time, it must be admitted, that if any party were disposed to make a stand as a party against ministers, they never had a better opportunity than the present moment offered. The right hon. gentleman and his colleagues had, by their recent proceedings, and particularly by their correspondence with the Bank, laid themselves open to the most just censure, as being ignorant, at this interesting crisis, of the real situation of the country. What man,

he would ask, could read the paper which had lately appeared, addressed by the right hon. gentleman and his noble colleague at the head of the Treasury, to the Bank of England, without being convinced, that if it were wished to oppose them as a party, there was a most important ground on which to found an opposition? That paper, he would venture to say, betrayed an ignorance of the real situation of the country, which could not be expected from any man who had paid common attention to the passing events of the last few months. Was it not most astonishing that any set of men, who had their eyes open to what was passing around them, much more those men who had the advantage for two or three months past, of almost daily interviews with the governor and deputy-governor of the Bank of England, should send into the world a paper in which they said, "*now that the distress has subsided, it is fit that some remedy should be applied to prevent a recurrence of the evil?*" Why, did any man in the country, except the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues, believe that the distress had subsided? Did any man believe that the danger was over? He was sure that no man who really knew what was passing in the country could subscribe to such an opinion: and he was equally certain, that any remedy against the recurrence of the distress, founded upon the assumption, that that distress had passed away, would be altogether inoperative. The speech of the right hon. gentleman, and the remedy which he now proposed to the House, did absolutely nothing. The remedy was milk and water, and would tend rather to aggravate than relieve the distress; and if ministers were to appeal to any body of commercial men—to men who really did know the state of the country—they would be told, that the authors of the paper he had alluded to, were altogether unfit men to propose a remedy for the evils which did really exist in the country. The remedy now proposed by the right hon. gentleman was quite shallow: it was really unworthy of men who ought to know what was the situation of the country. He said this without meaning the slightest disrespect to the right hon. gentleman, for whom he had the greatest esteem; and he could assure him, that he had no wish to see any other occupy his place, but he must tell him, that in his speech and his resolution he had not touched the evil. He had scarcely gone more than skin-deep; but, an effectual remedy for the evil he certainly had not proposed. It was a very different thing to suggest what might be sufficient to allay a temporary disorder, from that of providing for the permanent system under which the country should hereafter be placed, with a view of preventing the recurrence of that disorder. The permanent state in which it might be desirable to place the country, was very different from that which the exigency of the crisis might demand. It was for not making this difference that he blamed the right hon. gentleman. There were, in all cases, to be found men so wedded to theory, that when a particular emergency arose, they immediately recurred to their books and to the adoption of a certain set of rules there laid down, without ever considering, that it would be necessary to adapt the remedy to the actual situation of things, and not to what might be their more perfect condition. Such men cared not what interest they rode over, provided they arrived at a given point in any manner. He was not indifferent to the general principles to which the right hon. gentleman had that evening adverted, or to the end he proposed to attain; but he thought that to attain that end, general principles alone would not be sufficient. Those principles must, if possible, be fitted to present circumstances. A man must go round to his object according to the obstacles which were interposed, and not attempt to get at it as straight as the crow flies. This was an error which had defeated many well-intended and really good projects, because they were not adapted to the circumstances under which they were to be called into operation. He remembered another instance of this attachment to theory in that House. When the report of the bullion committee was discussed a large party in that House were so convinced of the abstract expediency of resorting to cash payments, that because the House had resolved, that it would be desirable to resort to such payments, they moved as an amendment, that it would be desirable to pay in gold in the succeeding January, and he believed of this number were the right hon. the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. *Canning* observed, that the hon. member was mistaken in applying the remark to him.

Mr. *Baring* said, he had not intended to apply it to the right hon. Secretary, whose sound mind would lead him to take a more clear view of the question. But, he had mentioned the fact, that such an amendment had been proposed at the time, as an illustration of his argument, that the perfect theorist made for his object at once, and without reference to the particular circumstances by which he was surrounded. Now, what he wished to impress on the House was, that they must approach the end in view according to the difficulties which opposed themselves; and the first step necessary to be taken was, to acertain what was the nature and the cause of those difficulties. As to the latter, he agreed generally with the right hon. gentleman, except that he had rather studiously kept out of view the share which the government had in their production. If he were asked his opinion on the subject, he would say, that the Bank of England—(and when he spoke of the Bank, he begged to repeat what the right hon. gentleman had said of the country banks —that it was not the individuals, but the system of which he complained; for the individuals who composed the directory of those establishments, he had personally the highest respect, from his recollection of the time when he was associated with some of them, and from his intimate acquaintance with their private worth)—had, in some degree, contributed to the present difficulties. He did not mean, of course, to say that they did so intentionally, but that such was the result of part of the system on which they had acted. One cause amongst others of that distress, was the great facility which existed at the end of the war of obtaining a metallic currency. There was at that period a facility of obtaining gold and of returning to a metallic currency, which had not existed to the same extent since; but it did not follow, that because there was a facility of procuring gold, it would therefore come into the country. They who reasoned thus would greatly deceive themselves. Gold and silver would not come unless we had something to give for them, and unless that something was in demand with those countries where it was in plenty. It had been a favourite theory with some to say, that by contracting its issues the Bank could cause gold to come into the country; but that alone would not be sufficient, for unless we sent commodities for it, we could not procure it, and they who acted upon the mere principle of a contraction of its issues by the Bank, as a means of bringing gold in, would find those issues might be very inconveniently contracted, without producing that effect. However, to return: gold was in great plenty on the continent at the end of the war, and might have been very easily obtained in this country; because, at that time, there was a demand for our manufactures, which, he was sorry to say, did not exist at the present day. Every country almost was now rivalling us in some branch of manufacture. It was particularly the case with America; and, day after day, we were excluded from a market in some one article or other of our former trade. At the end of the war, he repeated, we could easily have got gold; and he was sorry we had not at that period made an effort to restore our currency to its true basis. If asked, why the House of Commons had not taken some step at that period to restore the currency, he would answer, that if any blame was to be attributed on that account, it was to be attributed to his majesty's ministers, who had not submitted such a proposition. No doubt they would have then met with a strong opposition from the country banks; but if they had taken a bold, decisive step, it was certain they would have succeeded; for that was the time to settle the currency on its true basis. From the facilities he had mentioned of procuring gold, the Bank of England, in the years 1823 and 1824, had accumulated a large store of gold and silver in their coffers. They had increased their dividends from eight to ten per cent. (though they had since reduced them to eight), and had divided a large bonus. Upon the circumstance of agreeing to so large a dividend as ten per cent, he would just observe, that it was, at the least, improvident to undertake that which they might not hereafter be able to continue. As to the bonus, he would say nothing. They had, of course, a right to add to their capital if they possessed the means; but, such was the secrecy observed towards the public with respect to the real grounds of many of their proceedings, that any observations upon them by persons out of doors must, for the greater part, rest on conjecture. They had, as he had observed, at the beginning of 1823 and 1824, an immense accumulation of gold. They had at this period made large issues of paper, and at the same

time the country paper issued to an extent nearly in proportion; for though it would not appear at first, the issues of the latter were considerably affected by the former. One consequence of this excess of circulating medium was, that the rate of interest of money fell. Mortgages fell from five to four and three and a half per cent: and such was the anxiety of most capitalists in the country to get any interest, that they placed their capital out of their reach, and took for it securities which, though valuable, were not available in case they required the capital again. The Bank saw and felt what was going on: for in cases of over-issues on their part, they were certain to receive a check by the reaction in other quarters; which check they well understood. They saw that the system was drawing the gold out from them, and they began to fear for the consequence. They, therefore, all at once gave a sudden jerk to the horse on whose neck they had before suffered the reins to hang loose. They contracted their issues to a considerable extent. The change was at once felt throughout the country. A few days before that, no one knew what to do with his money: now, no one knew where to get it. He did not mean to say that the Bank had acted with a want of good faith to the public. They, no doubt, felt justified in the course they adopted; but, the effect was not the less felt by the public. The London bankers found it necessary to follow the same course towards their country correspondents; and these, again, towards their customers; and each individual towards his debtor. The banks in town and country, by advancing money on mortgages and other inconvertible securities, had put it out of their reach; and now they all sought to supply its place by every means in their power. Each man feared to let the capital within his reach go from him, for any other purpose than to meet his own unavoidable engagements. The consequence was obvious in the late panic. Every one desirous to obtain what was due to him, ran to his banker, or to any other on whom he had a claim; and even those who really had no immediate use for their money took it back, and let it lie unemployed in their pockets, thinking it unsafe in others hands. The effect of this alarm was, that houses which were weak, went immediately. Then went second-rate houses, and, lastly, houses which were solvent went, because their securities were unavailable at the moment. The daily calls to which each individual was subject put it out of his power to assist his friend; and this added to the general difficulty. All confidence was lost; and, in this country, commercial confidence was carried to an extent never exceeded in any nation. Scarcely one man could be found to trust his neighbour, every one endeavouring to husband his own resources for himself. Such a state of panic had hardly ever before existed amongst us. It might perhaps be said, that the weak and worst ought to be left go to the wall, and that others better would supply their places. If the effects of the panic had been confined to such only, that might be true, in a great degree; but the fact was, that the many who were really substantial, suffered in the general alarm. Men were known to seek for assistance, and that, too, without effect, who, on an examination of their affairs, were proved to be worth 200,000*l.*—men, too, who held themselves so secure, that, if asked six months before, whether they could contemplate such an event, they would have said it would be impossible, unless the sky should fall, or some other event equally improbable should occur.—With respect to the principle of the issue of small notes, he admitted, that as a permanent system, they ought to be called in. He knew that they were of great and in some instances almost indispensable use in the country; at the same time, if the mere circumstance of the misery which had been occasioned by such issue among the poorer classes of the community were to be taken into consideration, it was a sufficient reason why this nuisance should be abated. They had objected to the small notes of the Bank of England, on account of the numbers which the forgery of them had led to the gallows. They ought now to object to the small notes of the provincial banks, on account of the numbers whom they consigned to the poor-house and to all the miseries of a living death. Every gentleman who had seen the calamity which the failure of a country bank occasioned in provincial towns, must have seen numerous cases of the most heart-breaking description. It was therefore, in his opinion, a great pity that the House had not got rid of this deluge of paper at the time when it had the power to do so, and that it had not resisted, as it ought to have resisted, the importunity of the

country bankers. As soon as they could get rid of the present system with perfect safety, he agreed that they ought to do so; but at present they ought to recollect, that the house was on fire, and that the persons who were trembling for their lives in the garrets ought to be got out of it as soon as possible. When the fire was extinguished, and their safety provided for, then, and not till then, might the House set about legislating for them upon general principles. He could not help giving it as his opinion, that of late the Bank had lost sight, in a great degree, of that to which it ought to be instantly recalled; namely, a true sense of the system on which its affairs ought to be conducted, to entitle it to a charter of any kind whatever, and without which it ought not to be permitted to enjoy any privileges of an exclusive character. The main cause of the difficult situation in which the Bank was now placed was, that it had choked up its resources too much, in consequence of its connexion with government. For, let them just consider what the position of the Bank was, not only at present, but also at the time when these commercial disasters first came on. In the first place, the Bank had to provide for what was termed the "dead weight," which he believed now required 8,000,000*l*. Now, if there was ever any plan founded upon an absurd principle, it was this plan of the dead weight. As some gentlemen might be imperfectly acquainted with it, he would observe, that it was a plan by which certain long annuities, for forty-four years, were created, for the purpose of showing we had a sinking fund of 5,000,000*l*; when no thinking man, who had his eyes about him, could see a sinking fund to any thing like that amount. The plan, he had before said, was most absurd; but even had it been as politic as it was foolish, the inconvenience of the Bank mixing itself up with it was equally the same. The Bank had now to advance somewhere about 8,000,000*l*.—a circumstance which arose out of its too intimate connexion with the government. In addition to this, the Bank held Exchequer-bills to the amount of 7,000,000*l*. He would not pretend to assert it as fact, but he must say, he was rather apprehensive that the Bank had bought Exchequer bills in the market for the purpose of putting its money out to the best advantage, and had found it impossible to recall that money in due time when it was wanted. Besides these 8,000,000*l*. locked up in the dead weight —and the ingenuity of man could not have devised a better name for this absurd plan—and these 7,000,000*l*. in Exchequer bills, the Bank was bound to advance 7,000,000*l*. more for the government on what were technically called deficiencies—a measure which, he believed, was one of lord Bexley's sapient contrivances. For though he had a great respect for lord Bexley in his private capacity, he must be permitted to say, with all due deference to that noble lord, that in that contrivance he had not only stultified himself, but the whole House. It was a contrivance which was above all others singularly absurd. It seemed as if the noble lord had been desirous of rendering the Bank utterly incompetent to perform its functions. The Bank had now 7,000,000*l*. to advance for these deficiencies.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer*.—No, only five millions and a half.

Mr. *Baring*.—He did not wish to overstate the matter, and would take the sum to be that which the right hon. gentleman had stated. It was advanced by the Bank to enable the government to pay the dividends. The practice was, for the Bank to advance the sum necessary to pay the dividends, before the government received it; and then to have it repaid shortly afterwards, when the government had received it. Now, the misfortune of this system was, that the advances were again called for in so short a period after they had been repaid, that no advantage was reaped by the Bank from the employment of the money in the interim. The reimbursement was so quick, that the Bank had no time to lay it out; and, what was worse, it was liable to all the inconvenience of having a large quantity of its paper in circulation. Besides these three items, the Bank had undertaken to pay off 2,000,000*l*. on the 4 per cents; so that altogether, what with the dead weight, what with the Exchequer bills, what with the deficiencies, and what with the 4 per cents, it had 22½ millions locked up by the demands of government. Further than this, the Bank had lent one and a half million to the country gentlemen on the mortgage of their land; a measure which he held, upon principle, to be most improper and impolitic. The sum, it was true, was not large; but it aggravated the case against the Bank, as it added to the amount of its unconvertible capital.—He

had now shown, that of the capital of the Bank twenty-four millions were rendered utterly inapplicable to its general purposes, as a commercial establishment. The Bank was less able to meet any casual demand that might be made upon it, in consequence of its holding, what it was in the essence of all banking establishments, to avoid, a large number of unconvertible securities. The principle on which all banking establishments were conducted, was, to employ as much of their capital as they possibly could, but always to employ it upon available securities. He could conceive circumstances under which the right hon. gentleman opposite might feel himself justified in thus clogging the resources of the Bank. If the right hon. gentleman, from the political state of the country, had been in a situation of difficulty, he might be justified in saying, "True it is, I have put the Bank to some inconvenience by my measures, but it was only because I could not get the money elsewhere; and I thought it better to put it to a small inconvenience, than to run the risk of putting the country to a great one." But, specious as such language might appear in a season of difficulty, it could not be tolerated for a moment at a time when the country was at peace abroad and in a state of tranquillity at home. He must say, that, considering that stocks were at 95 and 96, and that the right hon. gentleman had the power of making any arrangement that he thought fitting, he never had heard of a clumsier arrangement than that which the right hon. gentleman had made with the Bank, on the part of government. He did not intend to introduce into the question of the Bank any criticism upon the plan of finance adopted by the right hon. gentleman further than was necessary to elucidate his view of it. But this he must repeat, over and over again, as a great fault in it, that the right hon. gentleman had, as it were, compelled the Bank to have twenty-four millions of unconvertible capital. The Bank, it ought to be further recollected, had at present no capital of its own: It was all lent to government, upon security, it was true, that was unexceptionable, but still it was lent to it; and yet the government, without any necessity for it, either real or alleged, proceeded to choke up its further available resources, in the manner in which he had above described. It was the custom upon all questions—and it was very expedient upon this—to consider what had occurred in former times. The year 1783 was a period of great commercial embarrassment. The Bank was all but stopping payment, in consequence of its dealings with government; and yet, all that the government then owed was only seven millions. In the year 1797, another period of distress, the Bank attributed to its transactions with the government the necessity under which it laboured of applying for a suspension of cash payments. However that statement might once have been disputed, he believed there was nobody who would now deny it. The government undoubtedly did cause that suspension. It had been anticipated for some time previously to its occurrence; but the *coup-de-grace* was given to it by that Austrian loan which they had recently seen brought to so pitiful a termination. He did not mean to say that, with such a war as that in which the country was engaged in 1797, the country could have avoided coming, sooner or later, either to that suspension of cash payments or to a peace. No such thing. What he meant to say was this—that that result was hastened by the manner in which the government had locked up all the available resources of the Bank. And yet, with all this experience before it, the government still persisted in its former objectionable measures: though, in the years 1783 and 1797, when the Bank was obliged to play the pranks it had done, it had not been mixed up with it to any thing like the sum of twenty-four millions. One of the first measures which, he thought, the government ought to adopt to make the Bank efficient to the public, was to set it at ease in this respect, and to give it elbow-room, if he might use such an expression, for its future operations. He considered that such a step would be advisable as a permanent measure; but he was well aware, that it could not give immediate relief to the evils which at present sat heavy on the country. He had heard it suggested in some quarters, that the issuing of a quantity of Exchequer-bills would be of great effect in mitigating the existing distress; but it was his opinion, that such a measure would inflict more unsparing ruin on the community, than any which had yet been inflicted upon it. Sure he was, that the funding of those bills would aggravate the present evil, and spread alarm and confusion in every direction. The Bank, as

it was managed at present, was the heart of all the circulation of the country; and it was evident that if that circulation was not perfect, a derangement must ensue in all its subordinate functions. The derangement which existed at present in all the relations of commerce, had arisen from the unsteady conduct of the Bank acting suddenly upon the country bankers, and had been much assisted in its operations by the mania for wild speculation which had spread over the country like a whirlwind, of which nobody knew whence it came or whither it was going. For he would say, that, unsatisfactory as the state of the circulation was, it never could have given rise to such evils as now pressed upon the country, if it had not been attended with such an unprecedented excess of speculation.—The hon. member then proceeded to argue, that, independently of the danger to which the Bank was necessarily exposed by the choking up of its resources, there was a political evil arising out of it which it was the grossest folly, on the part of government, to tolerate. In the time of peace the object of a wise government was, to have its monied institutions, like the ships of war at Portsmouth, ready for a start on a moment's notice. Now, from a Bank which had twenty-four millions of its capital choked up in the support of silly conceits and idle devices, the government had taken away the means of a start; if such a start became necessary. In such a contingency the government would find, to its detriment and disgrace, that it had not only choked up the resources, but paralyzed the powers of the Bank. If they supposed, that because they had got a return of all the ships of the line at Portsmouth being in a sea-worthy condition, they were therefore in a situation to go suddenly to war, they would find, when it was too late, that they were mistaken, and that the state to which their impolitic measures had reduced the Bank, had deprived them of the means of carrying it on. The power of this country was well known to be in its Treasury. It was far beyond any thing to which its military force entitled it to aspire: it rested not upon its bayonets, but upon its money. The last contest in which it was engaged was decided entirely by its money. Forty or fifty thousand men were the largest army of Englishmen which were ever upon the continent, under the command of that great and illustrious captain, who had delivered Europe from the thraldom of Napoleon. The rest of our military force consisted of the natives of other countries, and principally of Germans. The powers of Austria, Russia, and Prussia, were all successively put in motion by our money. The great arm of our country—its power, its influence, its consideration—was in its Treasury. Those, therefore, who had left the country in such a state, that it would be impossible for it to avail itself suddenly of that arm of its strength, had acted as absurdly as it was possible for any set of men to act, who arrogated to themselves the name and character of statesmen.—The hon. member remarked, that before the House came to the conclusion, that the present system of banking was inefficient, and did not work well to the community, it ought to see it act in the unfettered command of all its resources, and not with those resources choked up as they were at present by the proceedings of government. He said, first of all, that they ought to relieve the Bank from its present difficulties, and then, when that was done, make it understand, that it ought always to be ready with four, five, six, or even eight millions for the service of the country. It was his opinion, that if the first lord of the Treasury had recently sent to the Bank, and, after informing the directors that Treasury-bills were at a considerable discount, had desired them to buy up from four to eight millions of Exchequer-bills, it would not have been in the power of the Bank to have acceded to his request. He believed, that if the Bank had been unincumbered with the government, it would have been relieved from the difficulty, or, as some called it, the liberality of making the issues it lately had done. If it had possessed more elbow-room to turn itself about in, it would have come forward with alacrity to assist the public; and thus the difficulties which had recently occurred would have been obviated. Three-fourths of those difficulties arose entirely from panic; a fourth of them might, perhaps, have arisen from actual distress. Like people in a theatre, who sometimes crushed one another to death, in the alarm occasioned by imaginary and not by real dangers, the members of the community had hurried one another into distress and bankruptcy, by the violent efforts they had individually made to avoid them. The Bank, it ought to be recollected, was the banker of the government. In private life, any individual who

wanted a temporary pecuniary aid, applied to his banker for it, and in general his banker allowed him to have it. The government, like a private individual, might often be in want of similar assistance, and should always be able to procure it, without leaving the Bank an opportunity of saying, "We cannot give it you without choking up our resources, and becoming less independent of you than we ought to be," especially in a time of peace, and with the three per cents at 94 and 95. His own private opinion was, that the Bank, if it were relieved from its difficulties, would be fully able to discharge all the functions for which it was intended, and would soon relieve the country from the panic which now prevailed, as to its sufficiency to maintain the currency. If the Bank were conducted upon proper principles—if it would not drive such hard bargains, and would be content with less profits than it sought to obtain at present—if it would be satisfied with a profit of five instead of eight per cent—and if, when its charter expired, it would adopt some prudent and liberal measure to limit the emoluments upon its capital, he was convinced that the system would soon stand upon a better footing than it did now, and that some preventive would be found against the recurrence of such evils as had lately befallen the country. He was well aware, that ever since the resumption of cash payments, doubts had existed in the minds of very respectable persons, as to whether there was a capacity in the country to maintain invariably such payments. He was well aware, that many persons apprehended that the pressure of our national debt, of our taxation, and of various other circumstances, would render the continuance of such a system impossible; but, for his own part, he had never participated, neither did he participate now, in those apprehensions. He thought that if the Bank were properly administered, it would be capable of giving full and permanent effect to such a system; but, at the same time, he must in candour confess, that he should like to see the Bank rendered more perfect than it now was. If any bank could be formed upon such principles as would give greater security to the Bank of England, not only in respect of securing the commercial interests of the country, which had recently been in considerable jeopardy, but also in respect of advancing its political interests abroad, he, for one, should be very glad of it. The desideratum for such a bank was, to erect it on a wider basis. It might be done, when the charter of the Bank expired, either by extending its capital, or by raising rival banks; for which there were not wanting several specious projects. He should listen with great attention to any thing upon that subject; because, though he thought that the present system might be made efficient, if it were fairly and honourably carried into effect without any tricks, contrivances, or paltry meannesses, still he was free to confess, that he should have no objection to improve and strengthen it. The first plan which he had heard mentioned was to erect a second bank. Now, if the erection of any establishment in rivalry to the Bank of England was meditated in the metropolis, he must say, that he knew of no plan on which it could be erected without augmenting the present confusion. If they had one bank in the east and another in the west, it would bring the country into confusion, in a shorter time than any other measure which could be possibly devised. One bank would be jealous and fearful of the other, and would take every opportunity of acting against it. Neither the public nor the banks themselves would know precisely what they were about. At present, the Bank of England was perfectly acquainted with the nature of its transactions: it knew the risk which it ran, and the responsibility which it incurred; but, if a rival bank were established by its side, the competition would create confusion, and in the eagerness for profit, the recollection of its liabilities would be lost. He conceived that no arrangement of that kind could be made with perfect safety. But, if they strengthened the old establishment by widening its basis and extending its capital, he was of opinion that they would confer a very substantial benefit upon the community.—He had been in hopes, that the right hon. gentleman opposite was going to usher in that evening some plan, better than any which had hitherto been devised; but, a speech of greater promise and of less performance he had never heard in the whole course of his parliamentary experience. The object of the right hon. gentleman's measure was contained in the simple annunciation, that the Bank had agreed to concede that part of its privileges by which any banking establishment was prevented from consisting of more than six members. He must tell the right hon. gen-

tleman in the outset, that he had made his own answer to his own scheme, though perhaps he did not think so, quite conclusive against it. For, though at present the members of a banking establishment might consist of as many as six persons, it appeared that only twenty-six out of the seven hundred banks which now existed had availed themselves of that privilege. For his own part, he saw nothing magical in the number six; and if six persons could not now be found, except in a few instances, who were willing to trust themselves together in banking establishments, he did not conceive it very likely that more than six persons would be found anxious to associate themselves together for such purposes, when the privilege of doing so was given them by law. If any country gentlemen should avail themselves of that privilege, he should say that it was the greatest act of folly they could possibly commit. If the right hon. gentleman had allowed persons to combine together on condition of depositing their capital, and of limiting their responsibility to that capital, he would have found plenty of individuals ready to engage in such associations. Landed gentlemen would put down their five, their ten, or their twenty thousand pounds, as might be convenient; and banks would then be formed all over the country on the very best principles. He saw no objections at present to such a system; but, if it were sifted as it ought to be, it was probable that some objections might be discovered. He thought, however, that they would be of a trivial nature, and would be more than counterbalanced by the advantages to which such a system would give rise. He was sure that by adopting it, solid establishments would be created all over the country, in which prudent men with families would be very willing to connect themselves. They might be created on the principle of a joint-stock company. In that case, he would make it incumbent on all persons who joined it to make a public record of their capital, and to balance their books once a year. Then, if any partner owed any thing to the bank, and touched his capital, he should be made liable for all the debts of the establishment—a regulation of which he could not complain, as he would not be involved in them without his own direct participation. —There was another point on which he wished to express his sentiments to the committee. It was one of extreme importance to all banking establishments, and contained a principle, which, if adopted, would put them out of all apprehension of such danger as they had recently incurred: he meant the propriety of making silver as well as gold a legal tender. He was not going to state any novelty upon this subject. Silver was a legal tender in every country but our own; and in point of law, up to a very late period, it was even a legal tender here, when of a fixed fineness. The proportions having been ill regulated in this country, it became the interest of the debtor to pay in gold rather than in silver, and thus a practical tender of gold was established among us. We had now had it so long, that we had almost forgot how we came by it; but, what he had stated was matter of history, and not of speculation. The question, when it was determined in that house at the time of the Bullion committee, was determined too much in accordance with the views of philosophers and theorists, who looked to a fanciful perfection in the standard of value, and lost sight of a consideration which they ought always to have had before them; namely, not to establish a more imperfect, in their anxiety to establish a more perfect standard. If one point was better established than another, it was this —that the perfection of a standard consisted in its invariableness. Gentlemen might say, "If that be so, how can the standard boast of its invariableness, when it consists of two different metals, and when, to the general mutability of each, is added the mutability between gold and silver? Surely, instead of diminishing, such a plan will increase the variableness of the standard." Now, if he could show that by admitting the two, the currency, as distinguished from the standard of value, would, in point of fact, be rendered less variable, they would have a less variable standard to measure all commodities by. In the first place, the Bank of England, if it had the power to pay in silver, would be able to get it out of every country in the world. Gold, on the continent, was an article of merchandise, whereas silver was not so, and was always to be procured. If a man had a bill of exchange upon Hamburgh, Amsterdam, or Paris, he might get either gold or silver for it; but if he got silver, and with that was obliged to buy gold, it was evident that by rendering gold scarce, he would create a

difficulty in procuring it. He contended, that in proportion to the facilities afforded to the Bank of England for making tenders, would be its power to assist its customers. He had no doubt that if they could get at a knowledge of the operations of the Bank, it would appear that the Bank had sent silver to the continent to procure gold. Now, if the Bank had been possessed of the power to pay in silver, it would have had no occasion to resort to any such measure. The evil of a single standard was clearly preceptible. The Bank, obliged to pay in a metal which was not the currency of any other country, but a matter of merchandise, was liable to be speculated against in every direction; and nothing would be easier than for a person with very inferior capital to stop the Bank from getting even a single ounce of gold. It might be said, perhaps, that the present system had worked well in former times. He denied it. The country did not go on well with it. We were obliged to terminate the American war, because, if we had continued it, the Bank must have stopped its payments in gold. When the French war came, it was of such a nature that we could not stop it, because the French would not make peace. The Bank in consequence suspended its payments in cash, and the country went on with the war. The system, therefore, did not work any better for us in former times, than it did at present. The whole history of the past proved it beyond dispute. He did not like to say all that he knew upon the subject; but, if he was rightly informed, much of the present difficulties of the country depended upon other countries and upon other powers. The country was now in a state of embarrassment, in which it would not have been placed, if it had possessed the same metallic standard with every other country in the world. Its present difficulties arose from its taking a metallic standard which no other country took. Why was this country the only sufferer? Because the variableness of our standard depended on the variableness of a currency of paper and gold mixed; whereas the variableness of the standard in other countries depended on a currency of silver and gold mixed; and it had always been found that paper and gold mixed were more variable than silver and gold mixed. Take, for instance, the case of France, where gold and silver lived together in perfect harmony, and where there was seldom more than a variation of 10 centimes between them. They sometimes differed from 10¾ to 10½; but he was told that now, for the first time since the establishment of the gold and silver currency, the difference had increased 1½ per cent in consequence of the demands of the Bank for gold; and that, in consequence of our wish to have this beautiful and philosophical standard, the price of it had risen in every country of Europe. Against this variation of ten centimes, he would place the variation of 20 or 30 per cent which existed in the value of commodities in England, and even in that of the pound sterling. He contended, that this variableness in the standard cramped the measures of the Bank, but in a tone of voice which was occasionally so low that it did not reach the gallery.—After apologizing for the length at which he had trespassed on the attention of the House in explanation of his views of the expediency of adopting a double standard of silver and gold, he proceeded to state the manner in which he would carry it into execution. Some persons imagined, that there would be considerable difficulty in establishing this double currency; but he knew others, on whose judgment he could rely with confidence, who thought that it could be established with ease and safety, and that it was absolutely necessary to relieve the country from its present difficulties. His plan was to leave the smaller silver coins in circulation, as the half-crowns, the shillings, and sixpences; to call in the crown-pieces, which at present were little used, and could well be spared from the general circulation; to recoin them, and to make the crown-piece a legal tender to any amount, not taking it at the present value of silver, for that would be depreciated, and he should be sorry to propose any depreciation in the standard. The proportion of gold to silver was in England 15 to 1, and in France 15½ to 1; but he trusted that by making both legal tenders, they would approach nearer together, and that the disproportion between them would ere long cease to be so great as it was at present. He was quite sure that the smaller coins which he should leave in circulation, would not be injurious to the success of his plan. It might, perhaps, be objected, that with ten sixpences of the current coin he could buy twelve of the present standard, and that

a depreciation of it would consequently ensue. But that was the case even now, as silver could be bought in the market. The standard of the one pound sterling, however, would remain the same, and the Bank would have greater facility than it had at present for protecting itself against danger. Gentlemen might, perhaps, suppose that they would be incumbered by the difficulty of carrying about such a medium; but they would find that they would be able to get 100*l.* of gold for 100*l.* of silver for an agio of two shillings; as in France it was now done for an agio of two francs. He had one observation more to make. Gold went out of the country much faster than silver. Most things in life were attended by their disadvantages as well as by their advantages. They had now got a beautiful coin of peculiar fineness, which, as the exportation of it was permitted by law, went with great rapidity out of the country. The old principle was, that the moment the exchange turned ¾ or 1 per cent against England, the gold was exported; but now the case was entirely altered. Formerly, it could not be exported without considerable fraud, and some risk; for when it was once out of the country, it was liable to seizure by the officers of the Customs. Now, it could be put openly into a bag, and carried away; and, in times of difficulty like the present, a man would prefer taking coin abroad with him to taking a bill of exchange, as there was risk with the one and not with the other. It was exported, too, in infinitely larger sums than it was heretofore: for it was now sent out in hundreds of thousands of pounds by men of large capital, who formerly refused to export it, as it was contrary to law, and so left the trade to Jews and the smaller dealers in contraband commodities. Thus, the Bank had formerly a greater power of protecting itself against danger than it had at present; and it was therefore requisite to furnish it with fresh powers for its security and preservation. A further advantage of establishing a double standard would be, that if the gold went out of the country, the Bank could pay in silver; and if the silver went out, it could pay in gold; so that, admitting that there might be some imperfections in this system, the advantages of it would far more than counterbalance them. It would be the best method of relieving the country from its present embarrassments; and if it would prevent, as he maintained it would, the recurrence of similar distress, there was no sacrifice which we ought not to make for the adoption of it. No slight difference in the standard ought to deter us from taking measures to prevent the recurrence of events similar to those which had recently convulsed the country.—With respect to the amount of the issues which the right hon. gentleman now proposed to call in, he must observe, that a considerable diminution had taken place. On a recent occasion, the right hon. gentleman had stated them to be 6,000,000*l.* Now he called them 4,000,000*l.*; and not long since they were said to be 8,000,000*l.* They had been proceeding in this inverse ratio with so rapid a declension, that it was not improbable they might at no very distant period, be rated as nil. Now, although the sudden calling in of any of these sums, whichever amount might be ultimately fixed on, would be the cause of great distress, yet that must not be considered with reference to the effect which the measure might produce in the metropolis. What would scarcely be felt here would be the cause of infinite mischief in the country; because the scale upon which it would be applied would be so much larger. Here such a sum would be nothing. In the country it would be every thing. He would further suggest to the right hon. gentleman, that it would be prudent to pause before the plan which he had proposed should be adopted; for this reason—that although the issue of the small notes had already been partly restrained, it had been done at the price of increasing the existing distress. The country bankers had already begun to dun their debtors, and to call somewhat clamorously for all that was owing to them. It was true that the right hon. gentleman meant to give three years for the completion of his plan; but it was obvious, that for what was to be done three years hence preparations would be begun now. That period might be sufficient for the object which the right hon. gentleman contemplated; but although the country bankers had that time for the regulation of their own affairs, and for adapting them to the alteration which was to take place, it did not follow that they would afford that time to others. This circumstance, among many others, convinced him that the right hon. gentleman had not fully considered the in-

tensity of the distress which prevailed, nor the urgency which required an efficient remedy. He knew very well, that when the proposed scheme should be effected, we should come back to sound principles, upon which there would be no danger in acting; but his anxiety was to know what was to be done in the mean time; and unless this should be ascertained, he thought the House could not safely proceed. He thought that the right hon. gentleman had given the House an opportunity of considering what they ought to do; and he thought too that his motion that the small notes should not be out for more than three years to come would be wholly inefficient, unless accompanied by a provision, that no more notes should be stamped than those which were now actually in circulation. He knew that no effort which he might make would be available in preventing the measure, if it had been finally determined upon; but this conviction would not induce him to relax in the earnestness with which he represented what to him appeared very forcible objections against it. He wished the right hon. gentleman could be prevailed upon to postpone his measure for another year, or to leave it alone altogether. He was not less anxious than any man that a remedy should be applied to the distress which now prevailed universally, and he was ready to discuss it at that moment if it should be proposed; but he could not bring himself to see that remedy in the plan which the right hon. gentleman had suggested. On the contrary, he thought that the right hon. gentleman was going too fast, if not too far, in his present motion. It could not be just, and he was sure no man could believe that it was judicious, to set at work that screwing operation when that system of grinding was going on which the country could not bear. If, on the contrary, things should be let alone, the distress would certainly not be aggravated, and the people would probably find out that three-fourths of it had been the result of mere panic and alarm, which was, in many respects, unfounded. He was not too sanguine in believing, that the storm, amidst all the mischief which it had produced, would blow away many of the evils that had prevailed, and disperse the noxious influences under which the country had so widely suffered. Those measures which he wished to see adopted, and which were recommended by their obvious expediency and safety, were, that banks should be established either upon the principle of joint-stock companies, or in such other way as might induce persons of capital to go into them; that a silver currency should be resorted to; and that ministers should relieve the bank of England from that incumbrance which its present connexion with the government occasioned.

Lord *Folkestone* said, it appeared to him that the right hon. gentleman had come to the House with a proposal for applying a remedy to an evil, the nature of which he had not yet ascertained. He thought he did the right hon. gentleman no injustice in this belief; because, no man who looked to his speeches, and to those of his colleagues, could doubt that they appreciated the difficulty and danger which prevailed at much too low a rate. For his own part, he thought that the present crisis was much more serious, and the consequences with which it was fraught much more injurious than his majesty's ministers seemed to imagine. The revulsion which had taken place had produced universal calamity. The property of private individuals was ruined, the most important interests of the country impaired, and its commerce going to decay. Melancholy as the prospect was at this moment, there was no certainty that it would improve. The right hon. gentleman was wholly mistaken if he thought that he (lord Folkestone) was not anxious to prevent that fluctuation which had lately been experienced. On the contrary, he was most anxious to do so, seeing that he attributed to that fluctuation most of the disasters which they had now to deplore. Upon this, as well as upon many other points, he had to assure the right hon. gentleman that he was mistaken. He agreed with his hon. friend who spoke last, that the right hon. gentleman, in the plan which he had suggested, was proceeding too fast. The only remedy which he proposed was, in fact, to repeal the measure of 1823, which was a cabinet measure, and to which, as the right hon. gentleman was then a member of the government, he must be supposed to have given his assent. Although he (lord Folkestone) did not disapprove of that repeal, he must beg leave to trouble the House with a few observations upon it. It would be remembered, that the bill to which he had just alluded was first proposed in 1822,

after several years of intense pressure, and when a wide-spreading calamity had prevailed over the whole of the country. The distress, he must remind the House, had been most severely felt in 1819, 1820, and 1821, and it had then pressed most heavily upon the manufacturing interests; but it was not until 1822 and 1823 that the agriculturists suffered, and then it was stated, that the bill was brought in to assist the circulating medium of the country. And what was the consequence? Why, that prices immediately rose, and had continued at a high rate from that period to the present. In 1819, that measure, which was commonly called Mr. Peel's bill, passed, which enacted that, after the year 1823, no small notes should be issued by the Bank. The consequence of this was, that the Bank began collecting gold; of which they got a large quantity in a short time at a considerable expense. By this operation an immense difference was effected in the currency, which began to be felt in 1820 and 1821; and long before the time limited by the act all the small notes of the Bank of England had been withdrawn from circulation. The country banks were, upon this, compelled to follow the example as far as they could, and to narrow their issues, to remedy the distress consequent upon which the bill of 1823 was passed. Prices immediately rose, and the distress was thus relieved. It was now proposed to repeal that bill. But he would ask, whether the present circumstances of the country afforded the least reason for believing that to do so would not bring back again the distress? It was impossible to doubt that this must be the result of such a measure. In his opinion, nothing could be more injurious to the country than that eternal fluctuation of prices which had now been going on for several years. In 1815 and 1816 there was a cry of distress. In 1817 and 1818 that distress was relieved by the large issue of bank-notes. Then came Mr. Peel's bill, and after that a fall of prices. Then the bill of 1823 was passed, and then the prices went up. Now, it was proposed to repeal that bill; and the consequence must inevitably be another decline of prices. The most mischievous of the many evil consequences which attended these fluctuations was, the loss which they occasioned to the poor man; not only because they caused him to lose whatever little property he might have laid up, but because they bore heavily upon him in every article of necessary consumption. He considered this point worthy of the most serious attention of the House; and although it had, upon some other occasions, been treated, as he thought, with unbecoming levity, he must remind the House that, in all these changes of property, the poor-rates had gone on increasing, and, consequently, the sufferings of the poor. He contended, that the poor man was now in a worse and more degraded state than he was in twenty-five years ago. He had examined the returns of the allowances made to the poor in the county of Berkshire, and he found, that at the period to which he alluded, the weekly allowance had been two loaves and 1*s.* for a man; one loaf and 1*s.* for a woman; and one loaf and 6*d.* for a child. Now, the allowance was only one loaf and 1*s.* for a man; one loaf and 6*d.* for a woman; and one loaf only for a child. The condition of the poor man was, therefore, worse now than it was twenty-five years ago; and he was convinced that, whatever effect the fluctuations might produce on other classes of society, the lower orders always suffered.—With respect to the other measures which formed a part of the right hon. gentleman's proposal, he protested that he did not see much good which could, by any possibility, result from them. He was aware they were open to many objections, but he did not think the House was prepared to decide upon them at present. He was quite convinced that the establishment of joint-stock banks would not do much towards relieving the present or preventing future distresses. It was generally supposed, and for his own part he believed it, that the existing evils arose, in a great measure, from the immense quantity of paper which was in circulation; and as these banks must, in any case, have a greater power of forcing paper into circulation than those now in operation, he did not see the vast benefit which was to be produced by them. On the contrary, he saw that a power would be granted which might prove injurious to the country.—A great deal had been said respecting Scotland, where such banks existed; but, it did not appear, from what he had learned on the subject, and from that book which had been so much read and commended, that the distress in Scotland was much less than that which prevailed in England. He could

not help believing, that the right hon. gentleman, in proposing the measure which he had that night brought down to the House, had not examined into the extent of the calamity which prevailed, nor of the remedies which it required. These facts were evident to him, not less from the language which had been addressed to the House on the first day of the session, than from that notable document which had lately been made public in the shape of a correspondence between the Bank of England and the lords of the Treasury. He did not mean to insist upon the necessity of the chancellor of the Exchequer, or the first lord of the Treasury, or any of the members of his majesty's government being acquainted with the rules of grammar, or that they should, in all their correspondence, observe the ordinary laws of the English language; but, without being too critical, he might be permitted to express his surprise at the manner in which the paper was written, when he considered the hands out of which it came. A more extraordinary document as to its language, he must say, he had never seen: but he considered the opinions which it advanced to be infinitely more singular. It began by stating, that the difficulty was all over, and that the pecuniary transactions had reverted to their accustomed course. Then, after having laid all the blame of the distress on the rash spirit of speculation which had prevailed, it proceeded to say, that the remedies must be so and so. It was true that his majesty's Speech told us, that the remedies were out of the reach of parliament; but this was only another of those inconsistencies which characterised the conduct of the right hon. gentleman in so many respects. He did not intend to offer any opposition to the measures now proposed; but he wished the House to be much better informed than they were at present, before they agreed to them. Every one must be astonished that only a year had elapsed in that state of brilliant prosperity about which so much had been said, and, at the end of it we found ourselves plunged in the deepest distress. It might be true, that a wild spirit of speculation had been one of the causes of that distress; but he must remind the right hon. gentleman, that no one had encouraged that wild spirit more than himself, and that the speeches which he had delivered in that House had promoted it far more than any other circumstances could have done. The contrast was indeed striking which his speeches now presented, echoing, as they did, the universal complaint of distress, from those of triumphant congratulation which he had indulged in formerly. When the last session of parliament opened, the king was made to congratulate the country on the prosperity which had so certain a prospect of enduring. The right hon. gentleman opened his budget in the same tone; and any one would have been scouted who had been hardy enough, at that time, to suggest that there might have been any thing hollow or unsteady in his glowing predictions. But the right hon. gentleman himself knew very well that they were hollow: he had the means of knowing it; his situation must have acquainted him with it; and yet, notwithstanding this knowledge, the right hon. gentleman continued to predict, and to argue, until the whole of the country believed all that he represented. The events which had since happened were the best commentary on those predictions; and the measure which the right hon. gentleman now proposed, as a remedy for the distress which had ensued upon the dream of prosperity, was the best proof that could be given of its emptiness. The noble lord concluded by expressing his conviction, that we should soon be again reduced to the same distress, from which the present measure was intended to relieve us.

Captain *Maberly* observed, that he concurred most fully in all the points which had been laid down in the very able speech of his hon. friend, the member for Taunton, excepting one. He certainly thought that the conduct which the Bank of England had pursued during the recent crisis entitled it to the gratitude of the country; and but for the very liberal assistance which it had rendered during the tempest, he should almost have been tempted to accede to any proposition for disjoining the connection between it and the government. What he objected to in his hon. friend's speech was, his advocating the establishment of two standards of currency, a gold and silver one. With respect to the substitution of a silver and gold currency, instead of that which at present existed, he should have no objection to its being adopted, if it were in the nature of a silver currency, to advance as that of gold might happen to recede; but as he believed that no such effect could possibly be produced, he should

hesitate to approve of it, though he might do so at the risk of being classed in that sect of philosophers of whom the hon. member was once a member, but on whom he now cast his censures whenever an occasion for doing so presented itself. Let hon. members look at the connection of this country with South America; let them consider what had been advanced by all Europeans who had travelled in that country, and more particularly by Baron Humboldt, who had stated, that that country was intersected throughout with rich veins of silver; and, such being the case, would it be politic to take that metal as a standard of currency with which the country might at any time be inundated, to the unhinging of all its trading regulations, and the altering at once of the relation between debtor and creditor—consequences which ensue from the constant fluctuations of a silver standard. Having touched slightly on that question, he would proceed to the subject before the House. He regretted, in common with the hon. member for Taunton, and the noble lord who had preceded him, that the causes to which the present mischiefs were mainly attributable, had not been more clearly pointed out by the chancellor of the Exchequer. Among those persons who were best informed on this subject, two opinions prevailed as to those causes: the first was, that it had been occasioned by the connection between the Bank and the government; and the second attributed it to the overtrading, and to that mania for speculation, which had existed in so extraordinary a degree. He declared himself to be of this latter opinion; and, while he stated the grounds which confirmed him in that opinion, he should endeavour to point out the considerations on which he thought the other erroneous. It had been stated that the low rate of interest had been the chief cause that had promoted these speculations, and this low rate of interest was attributed to the over-issues of the Bank; but these over-issues, as they were called, had existed for a year and a half before they affected the rate of exchange. Now, he put it to any gentleman who understood this subject, whether an over-issue could take place without its having the immediate effect of returning the paper upon the Bank, and causing the exportation of gold. If he had time he could convince any one, even among those who had never given the least attention to the subject, that it was impossible but that the effect he alluded to must have been produced. There was, on the Royal Exchange, a most acute and intelligent body of men, whose interests were inseparably connected with these affairs, and who were constantly watching them. If any such over-issue had taken place, these persons would have known and instantly taken advantage of it, and that they had not done so was a proof that there could have been no over-issue. To this important point he called the attention of the House; and he begged it to be recollected, that the alleged over-issues took place in 1823, while it was admitted that no change had taken place in the rate of exchange until 1825. In his opinion, the principal cause of the late distresses was the measures adopted in 1822 and 1823, by ministers, for reducing the rate of interest. The low rate of interest led to speculation. At the end of 1823, and the beginning of 1824, speculations of the wildest nature were set on foot. Persons who had derived a small income from the interest of their money, were unwilling to lose the comforts which they had previously enjoyed, and readily embarked in speculation as a means of augmenting their now reduced income. Mr. Tooke, in his excellent pamphlet, had pointed out other causes which operated with the spirit of speculation to produce the recent convulsion. That writer had stated, that about the end of 1824, the stock of manufactures of almost every description on hand was shorter than usual. The inference which the manufacturers drew from this circumstance was, that the rate of consumption had increased. The consequence was, that immense speculations took place in various articles. Cotton and silk were imported in immense quantities. To such an extent was the speculation in cotton carried, that it increased in price from 150 to 200 per cent. All seemed to go on well until towards the end of 1825, when a reaction suddenly took place. Every thing indicated that this re-action was approaching; and it came followed immediately afterwards by a panic—an unreasonable and senseless panic—a panic falling directly on the bankers, who were suddenly called on to pay all they owed, when it was notorious that bankers were a class of men who ought never to be called on at once to pay all they owed, whose business would never answer if

they were obliged to pay all they owed, and whose only chance of profit was in an uninterrupted continuance of credit. Of this panic no man could tell what might have been the consequences, if the Bank had not stepped in, and by their timely and liberal interference, saved the country from destruction. All this panic and all this distress, he attributed to over-trading and its natural results. This was a short history of the recent distress. He attributed it entirely to over-trading. It was an evil to which no legislative remedy could be applied. It could be cured only by the experience and example of those who had suffered. It was, to be sure, a sad lesson to those who had suffered; but it was to be hoped that it would have the effect of preventing them from embarking in such mad speculations in future.—The two measures brought forward by government had, he believed, very little reference to the causes of the late distress. The first measure, as the hon. member for Taunton had justly remarked, would prove inefficient. If there were now only twenty-six banking establishments in England which possessed the full number of partners allowed by law, by what magical charm did ministers expect that their measure would be able to raise up banking establishments composed of a still greater number of partners? Besides, the evil was not that the present banking establishments wanted solidity. This was proved by the fact, that the number of bankers who failed who were unable to meet all their engagements was very small. The evil in our present banking system was, the imprudence of bankers in the carrying on of their business—their want of knowledge, in fact, of banking.—With respect to the second proposition of the right hon. gentleman; namely, that which enabled the bank of England to establish branch banks, it met with his hearty concurrence, and he sincerely hoped it would be carried into effect. Those establishments would naturally be more cautious with respect to the amount of their issues than country banks. One of the measures which ministers had in contemplation was, the putting a stop to the issue of one and two pound notes. The reasons which ministers gave for this measure were to be found in the correspondence which had lately passed between the first lord of the Treasury and the chancellor of the Exchequer on the one hand, and the Bank on the other. In one of the papers composing that correspondence, the right hon. gentleman, and the noble lord his colleague, say, "It appears to us to be quite clear that such a measure would be productive of much good; that it would operate as some check upon the spirit of speculation, and upon the issues of country banks; and whilst, on the one hand, it would diminish the pressure upon the Bank and the metropolis, incident to an unfavourable state of the exchanges, by spreading it over a wider surface; on the other hand, it would cause such pressure to be earlier felt, and thereby ensure an earlier and more general adoption of the precautionary measures necessary for counteracting the inconveniences incident to an export of the precious metals." The allusion to the state of the exchange, in the paragraph which he had just read, was, in his opinion, quite beside the question. The unfavourable state of the exchanges was the effect of over speculation.—It was, he understood, part of the plan of the government to invest commissioners with the power of regulating the issue of small notes. To that he most decidedly objected in a political point of view. When he saw the manner in which commissioners of the sinking fund were schooled by government—how they were at their beck and call, purchasing and selling only as government pleased—he must object to any arrangement which would give ministers the power of interfering directly with the currency. On this political ground, therefore, he would oppose the measure. He did not anticipate from a metallic currency those advantages which some persons seemed to think would be derived from it. He was of opinion, that such a currency as we possessed, before the suppression of the one-pound notes, was good, and might again be adopted with advantage. Money had been happily compared by Adam Smith to the high roads of a country, which did not produce one blade of grass, or one stalk of corn; but which were the means of circulating all the corn and all the grass produced in the country. Gold and silver, however, might be exported, and purchasing something else might add to the effective capital of a country, and set more labour in motion. The more the effective capital of any country was increased, the more was the means of its prosperity augmented. By substituting a paper circulation, therefore, for a metallic currency, we

were saved the expense of maintaining the gold and silver in circulation, and production was augmented in proportion to the additional effective capital thus obtained. By persisting in maintaining gold and silver in circulation, a tax was, in fact, levied on the country, equivalent to the amount of all the profit which might be obtained by means of the additional capital. This was, he thought, a serious consideration, when applied to the proposal for suppressing the one and two pound notes. If this were satisfactorily made out, it could not, he thought, be advantageous to the country to substitute a metallic for a paper currency. It would change the relations of the country; it would cause the destruction of property; and it had not the support of any practice. It was at least an onerous remedy for the present distress, to suppress the one and two pound notes. He would, he repeated, deny that there was greater security to be found in a metallic than in a paper currency. The right hon. gentleman had himself destroyed that proposition by the sentence which immediately followed the one which he had already quoted from the correspondence upon the table. The passage to which he alluded was this:—"But though a recurrence to a gold circulation in the country, for the reasons already stated, might be productive of some good, it would by no means go to the root of the evil." The right hon. gentleman went on to say, in the same document, "We have abundant proof of the truth of this position in the events which took place in the spring of 1793, when a convulsion occurred in the money transactions and circulation of the country, more extensive than that which we have recently experienced. At that period, nearly a hundred country banks were obliged to stop payment, and Parliament was induced to grant an issue of Exchequer bills to relieve the distress. Yet, in the year 1793, there were no one or two pound notes in circulation in England, either by country banks or by the Bank of England. We have a further proof of the truth of what has been advanced in the experience of Scotland, which has escaped all the convulsions which have occurred in the money-market of England for the last thirty-five years, though Scotland, during the whole of that time, has had a circulation of one pound notes; and the small pecuniary transactions of that part of the united kingdom have been carried on exclusively by the means of such notes. The issue of small notes, though it be an aggravation, cannot therefore be the sole or even the main cause of the evil in England." He did not require a stronger proof of the insufficiency of a bullion currency to afford security than the statements contained in the right hon. gentleman's own paper; from which it appeared, that in 1793 the greatest convulsion took place under a bullion currency, whilst Scotland, which had possessed a paper currency for the last thirty-five years, had never experienced any convulsions whatever. He was willing to rest his argument in favour of a paper currency entirely on the document to which he had referred. To look, however, to the present period—it would be evident, that no greater advantages resulted from a currency of bullion than from a currency of which paper formed a prominent part. Compare the situation of Liverpool, London, and Lancashire, which possessed a metallic currency, with other parts of the country where a currency of paper prevailed, and it would be seen, that the former had been exposed to greater fluctuations than the latter. He did in his conscience believe, that the whole of the recent distresses had been caused by over-trading. Such periods of speculation were not of very frequent occurrence; but still they had sometimes existed, and were recorded in the page of history. The period of the South Sea scheme was distinguished by speculations far more extravagant than any which the country had recently been witness to. Those speculations, as described by a person who was an eye-witness to them, appeared so enormous, so wild, so unsure, that, compared with these recent schemes, they were as a drop of water to the ocean. A very interesting description of the period to which he alluded was given in Macpherson's "Annals of Commerce." "From morning till evening," said the writer, "dealers in speculations appeared in continual crowds all over Exchange-alley, so as to choke up the passages through it. Not a week passed without fresh projects, recommended by pompous advertisements in all the newspapers, which were now swelled enormously, directing where to subscribe to them. On some, sixpence per cent was paid down; on others, a shilling; and some came so low as one

shilling a thousand at the time of subscribing. Some of the obscure keepers of those books of subscription, contenting themselves with what they had got in the forenoon, by the subscriptions of one or two millions (one of which the author particularly well remembers), were not to be found in the afternoon of the same day; the room they had hired for a day being shut up, and their subscription books never more heard of. On others of those projects, 2*s.* and 2*s.* 6*d.* per cent were paid down; and on some few 10*s.* per cent was deposited; being such as had some one or more persons of known credit to midwife them into the alley. Some were divided into shares, instead of hundreds and thousands, upon each of which so much was paid down; and both for them and the other kinds, there were printed receipts, signed by persons utterly unknown. Persons of quality of both sexes were deeply engaged in many of these bubbles; avarice prevailing at this time over all considerations of either dignity or equity; the males coming to taverns and coffee-houses to meet their brokers, and the ladies to the shops of milliners and haberdashers, for the same ends. Any impudent impostor, whilst the delusion was at its greatest height, needed only to hire a room at some coffee-house, or other house near that alley, for a few hours, and open a subscription book for somewhat relative to commerce, manufacture, plantation, or of some supposed invention, either newly-hatched out of his own brain, or else stolen from some of the many abortive projects of which we have given an account in former reigns; having first advertised it in the newspapers the preceding day, and he might in a few hours find subscribers for one or two millions (in some cases more) of imaginary stock. Yet many of those very subscribers were far from believing those projects feasible: it was enough for their purpose, that there would very soon be a premium on the receipts for those subscriptions; when they generally got rid of them in the crowded alley to others more credulous than themselves: and in all events, the projector was sure of the deposit-money. The first purchasers of those receipts soon found second purchasers, and so on, at still higher prices, coming from all parts of the town, and even many from the adjacent countries: and so great was the wild confusion in the crowd in Exchange-alley, that the same project or bubble has been known to be sold, at the same instant of time, 10 per cent higher at one end of the alley than at the other end. Amongst those many bubbles, there were some so bare-faced and palpably gross, as not to have so much as a shadow of any thing like feasibility. The infatuation was at length so strong, that one project was in the newspapers advertised thus: 'For subscribing two millions to a certain promising or profitable design, which will hereafter be promulgated.'" He would only mention two or three of the extraordinary speculations which were at this period set afloat. Amongst them was a scheme for improving malt liquors, and for breeding silk-worms. For this purpose 20,000*l.* were actually subscribed, and several large buildings erected. There was likewise another scheme, which must have been peculiarly attractive, that of making salt-water fresh; and another, which appeared somewhat extraordinary, was to bring fresh fish to London by sea. To such an extent did the spirit of speculation then prevail, that 60*l.* was frequently paid for permission to subscribe to an undertaking. He would beg the attention of the House to a passage in which the author described the termination of the frenzy: "The frailty of the whole South Sea scheme now too plainly appearing to all, the stock on the 29th of September had fallen to 175 per cent, and their bonds were at 25 per cent discount; whereupon there appeared great uneasiness and clamour amongst the monied men, which produced a great run or demand for cash at the Bank, and a greater one on the private bankers, who had generally lent out much of their cash on South Sea stock and subscriptions; in consequence of which several very substantial ones were obliged to stop payment for some time. And now, just when drowning, all people began seriously to reflect on the calamities brought on people in France but a few months sooner by the famous Mississippi stock or bubble; and, to draw a melancholy parallel, which reflections, made a few months sooner, would have saved many a worthy family from distress. Great clamour was also raised on account of contracts at high prices, for the third and fourth money subscriptions performable on delivery of the company's receipts, although no re-

ceipts had ever been issued for them." Was not this account enough to prove, that the spirit of wild and ungovernable speculation was sufficient to produce a state of things such as existed at the present moment? He had hoped that he should have been able to give his support to the measures proposed by ministers on the present occasion. On all questions of commercial policy, however he might differ from them on other subjects, he had desired to concur with them. He believed in his conscience, that the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues had adopted a system by which the commerce of the country would be fostered and extended. That system was not perfect at present; but he was convinced that it was that only just and substantial basis, which reason had long claimed and advocated, and which national greatness had long imperiously required.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, that, although he could not concur with all that had fallen from the hon. member who spoke last, as to the causes of recent events, he was bound to acknowledge that he had made a very clear and luminous statement on the subject. The noble lord opposite, and his hon. friend (the member for Taunton), had, in the course of their addresses to the House, made some observations which would afford him an opportunity of giving an explanation upon a point which appeared to be misunderstood. His hon. friend, the member for Taunton, had indulged in animadversions, harsh and unsupported, on what he was pleased to call the insensibility of the first lord of the Treasury and of his right hon. friend the chancellor of the Exchequer, in respect to the present distresses of the country. He was not sure, indeed, whether his hon. friend had not included the whole of the members of government in his censure. It was not necessary to vindicate the noble lord at the head of the Treasury from the imputation of a want of feeling, either for the difficulties of the country, or the distresses of individuals. He was sure that the noble lord must be aware of the extent of suffering, from the course of his official duties, and the daily intercourse which he must have had with those who were most competent to inform him of the state of affairs in the city. Both the noble lord and his hon. friend had commented very strongly on a passage in the correspondence between government and the Bank, without distinctly understanding, as it appeared to him, the way in which it applied. The passage to which he alluded, was that commencing with the words, "the panic in the money-market having subsided," &c. He need not ask his hon. friend, who, he believed, was in London about the middle of December, and was a witness of what was passing, whether there did not exist at that time, for two or three days, such a state of affairs in the money-market, such a complete suspension of all confidence, as, contradistinguished from commercial distress, rendered it impossible to procure money upon the most unobjectionable security? He appealed to every gentleman present connected with the city, whether it was not a fact, that, during forty-eight hours, it was impossible to convert into money to any extent at least, the best securities of the government? Persons could not sell Exchequer bills; they could not sell Bank stock; they could not sell East India stock; they could not sell public securities on the funded debt of the country. That difficulty did not arise from any rational idea of the insolvency of the government, or of the Bank, or of the other great corporate body, but from that panic to which his right hon. friends the chancellor of the Exchequer and the first lord of the Treasury alluded, in the passage which had been referred to, as having existed and being removed. Was the statement not true, then, that the panic—that state of things which he had just described—had been removed? No one now heard of two or three London bankers stopping every morning. It was no longer impossible to convert good public securities into money. The operations of the Royal Exchange had resumed their ordinary course. Did lord Liverpool suppose that, when the panic in the money-market was over, the commercial transactions of the country would not be affected? No such thing. In the conversations which he had with lord Liverpool, his noble friend had stated, that the convulsions in the money-market must inevitably derange the ordinary transactions of commerce, and involve them in difficulties. The hon. member who last addressed the House seemed to be aware of the distinction which existed, between the operations of the money-market and those of commerce. If the difficulties which existed in the money-market a short time since had continued for only eight and forty hours longer, he

believed the effect would have been, to put a stop to all dealings between man and man, except by means of barter. It had very truly been observed, that the Bank, by their prompt and efficacious assistance, had put an end to the panic, and averted the ruin which threatened all the banking establishments in London, and through them the banking establishments and monied men all over the country. The conduct of the Bank had been most praiseworthy, and had, in a great degree, saved the country from a general convulsion. He would take upon himself to say, that the Bank, throughout their prompt, efficacious, and public-spirited conduct, had had the countenance, advice, and particular recommendation of the first lord of the Treasury and his right hon. friend to assist them. Therefore he had a right to say, that his colleagues in their communication to the Bank, alluded to *the state of the money-market only. It should be recollected, that his* colleagues were addressing persons with whom they had been in constant communication from the commencement of the panic. They knew the extent of the distress which existed in the commercial interest; but they did not allude to it, because it was not immediately connected with that part of the subject to which they were directing the attention of the Bank. His hon. friend had inferred from what appeared in the correspondence, that government was ignorant of what was passing in Scotland. Could it be supposed that his noble colleague and his right hon. friend were so ignorant of the state of the country, as not to know that the greatest commercial distress at present existed in Scotland, and that the Scotch bankers, by their mode of affording discounts, were aggravating that distress? It was, however, quite consistent with that fact, that the system of Scotch banking afforded greater securities than the English system, and therefore it was desirable to introduce the former into this country. He did not know whether the noble lord opposite intended to subject the whole of the members of government to the charge of insensibility to the distresses of the country, but he could assure the noble lord, that there was no part of his speech in which he so cordially and entirely concurred with him, as that in which he had stated, that a system of currency which produced great and violent fluctuations in the price of commodities, was one which, however it might affect the opulent merchant or the man of landed property, was most to be deplored, on account of the manner in which it operated to aggravate the distresses of the labouring classes. That was the opinion which he had uniformly maintained. It would be found recorded in the report of the bullion committee of 1810, and it had been stated by him whenever he had been called upon to deliver his sentiments on the subject. There was no part of the system of the currency at which he looked with greater anxiety, than the manner in which it prejudiced the interests of labourers, and particularly those employed in agriculture. It would take up too much of the time of the committee to enter into an exposition of the grounds of the opinion which he had formed on this point; but he conceived it to be one which the course of events had proved to be but too well founded. His hon. friend, the member for Taunton, had observed, that he had never heard a speech so calculated to create disappointment—so inadequate to the occasion, as that of his right hon. friend. His hon. friend had followed up that remark by a dissertation—a very able one certainly—to which he had listened with great attention and in some parts with great satisfaction —on the general system of banking, in the abstract. His hon. friend then entered upon a statement of the difficulties under which he supposed the Bank to labour on account of the advances on Exchequer bills, and other advances, more or less of a permanent nature, made by the Bank to government. As the question was one of fact, it was material that it should be set right. His hon. friend was considered a great authority; and a statement going forth from him was likely to produce considerable effect. He wished therefore that the matter should be fairly stated. His hon. friend had stated the advances made by the Bank on account of the half-pay annuities at eight millions, forgetting that considerable sums were paid by government to the Bank, twice a year, on account of that transaction, which, if deducted, would reduce the amount advanced by the Bank to 5,400,000*l.* He was not then going to discuss the prudence of that arrangement; he was only desirous, that the matter should be correctly understood, because it was a little hard that his hon. friend, who had himself contracted for loans with government, should endeavour

to throw on government the odium of having imposed on the Bank in the arrangement. The arrangement was a voluntary one on the part of the Bank; it was, in fact, a description of loan. The Bank, perhaps, had not pursued precisely the same course as his hon. friend would have adopted, under similar circumstances. He, perhaps, would have doled out the loan piece by piece; selling it to the public when he saw an opportunity of doing so to advantage. With that, however, he had nothing to do. The Bank were the best judges of their own interests. He could take upon himself to say, and no Bank director present could contradict him, that there was nothing done, on the part of government, to prevent the Bank from disposing of the contract, in any way they might think proper, at any period. He was sure that his hon. friend would not wish, particularly at the present moment, when he must be so fully aware of the danger of misrepresentation, to state any thing but the fact. He must say, however, that, in his statement of the manner in which the capital of the Bank was locked up, by its advances to government, he was not correct. His hon. friend said, that the whole of the capital of the Bank was lent to the government. If he meant, that the whole of the capital which the Bank possessed at the period of its foundation was lent to government as the price paid for their charter, he would not dispute the truth of that proposition; but his hon. friend ought to distinguish between that capital and that which had been accruing to the Bank, in consequence of their profits, and with which they were at liberty to deal as they pleased. His hon. friend had stated, that the Bank were in the habit of issuing 7,000,000*l.* upon Exchequer-bills, at one time, and 9,000,000*l.* at another, and that those advances swallowed up all their capital, and left them without any means at their disposal. In the first place, did any one suppose that the 7,000,000*l.* which constituted the charge on the consolidated fund, became all demandable on one and the same day? The money was drawn out in separate portions at different periods. At the same time, the accruing receipts of the new quarter were daily paid into the Bank; so that, after all, the alarming statement made by his hon. friend respecting deficiency bills, which he was surprised he should have put forth at a period of such general excitement, amounted to nothing more than this—that the Bank was in the habit of paying daily to, and receiving daily from, the government, in the same way as a private banker would deal with his customer. Instead of the Bank advancing 24,000,000*l.* to government, as his hon. friend had stated, they advanced only the sum he had mentioned on account of the half-pay (which they might get rid of if they thought proper), and about 6,000,000*l.* on Exchequer-bills; for, with respect to the deficiency bills, he considered it no advance at all. He was not a little surprised at another part of his hon. friend's speech. His hon. friend had stated, that at an early period after the conclusion of the war, the market which existed on the continent for our manufactures afforded a favourable opportunity for obtaining a supply of gold, which would have enabled government to have got rid of the one and two pound notes. But did his hon. friend recollect the state of distress in which the continent was placed by the operation of the tremendous war of which it had been the theatre for a quarter of a century? The continent had not then the means of paying for our manufactures. In fact, there was at the present moment, a much greater export of manufactures than at the period to which his hon. friend had alluded. Talk of the principles of trade—he was surprised to hear his hon. friend argue, that, in order to obtain a supply of bullion, it was necessary that the goods exported should be paid for directly in metallic currency. The quantity of exports last year was greater than in any previous year in the history of the country. Their total value was greater than in any previous year. What signified it to him, whether those exports went to Cuba, or the United States of North America, or the New States of South America. Did not his hon. friend know how bills sometimes travelled about through the world? It had come under his own knowledge, that bills given in payment for goods exported had travelled from South America to India, and had ultimately been returned to this country in the shape of bullion. To talk, then, of our having been shut out from the continent, and having lost the opportunity of obtaining bullion, shortly after the peace was a misrepresentation of facts. The acquirement of bullion depended on our exports. The hon. member who spoke last had imputed to his right hon.

friend, that he had not gone into the real causes of the distress of the country. The real cause had been stated by his right hon. friend. It was a spirit of speculation and overtrading. He agreed with the hon. member in thinking that the immediate cause of those distresses, and the feverish state in which the country had been recently placed, was to be attributed to overtrading; and the anxiety of his majesty's ministers was, not only to relieve the country at present, but to take such steps as would prevent the recurrence of those distresses—distresses which went to the extent of producing a stagnation and want of confidence in our trade, to a degree unparalleled in the history of this country —distresses, which rendered unsaleable and inconvertible into money, all the usual articles of trade and commerce. Let the House but consider for a moment what had been the immediate effect of this overtrading. It produced a rise in prices, so rapid that it had never been equalled. And, what was the consequence? Why, a fall as rapid and as unequalled as the rise had been. If he were that night asked to give documentary proof of the causes which led to those reverses in our commercial transactions, he should beg leave to read an extract or two, pledging himself, that they should be much shorter than those quoted by the hon. member who had just preceded him. Mercantile and trading men were, of course, aware that there was published, twice a week, in London, an account of the price current of the different articles on sale in the city; and to this the editor was in the habit of giving, at the end of the year, a summary of the rise and fall of prices, adding his own opinions of the manner in which the markets had been conducted during that period. The paragraph which he was going to read from that paper, had reference to the year 1825. The writer, after some observations and comments on the general state of the markets, went on to say, that such was the mania for speculation, which at this period (March and April 1825) had taken hold of persons of all classes—not confining itself to speculators, but extending itself to steady and respectable merchants and traders—that even in the article of nutmegs alone, the price rose, in the space of one month, from 2*s*. 6*d*. to 12*s*. 6*d*. per lb. He added, that the speculation in other spices had the effect of producing a corresponding rise in their prices. But the mania was not confined to these articles. In cotton, coffee, sugar, and tallow, the rage for speculation was equally great, and merchants, traders, shopkeepers' clerks, and apprentices, partook equally of the phrenzy of vying with each other in their endeavours to secure a monopoly in each different article; so that the prices were raised higher than ever could have been expected, and higher certainly than they could be long expected to continue. And this state of things, be it observed, was not included in those wild, insane, and bedlamite schemes, with which the market had been inundated; but had its rise amongst those, who were considered the sober, steady merchants and traders, of the metropolis. These speculations attached themselves to every staple commodity of our imports, for the purposes of manufacture, as well as to the foreign articles of our consumption:—cotton, wool, timber, wine, tobacco. In fact, every article which it was necessary to draw from foreign countries, became the object of this species of speculation. And when, he would ask, did all this take place? It took place at a period when the exchanges were against this country, and when gold was necessarily going out of the country. For he said again, and he was anxious to submit his statement upon this point to any set of practical men—that an unfavourable state of the exchanges had the effect of encouraging an increase of our exports to, while it checked our imports from, foreign countries. Well, then, if any set of practical men saw that, at a period like this, when our coin was of itself finding its way out of the country, that every corner of Asia and America was ransacked for cotton and for wool; and if, at such a period, money was found so plenty in the country, as to be hawked about, and offered at a depreciated rate of interest, was it not a convincing proof, that there was something wrong in our currency? And if so, he would ask any sober man,—certainly there were not many sober men in the city at the period to which he alluded —but he called upon any sober man to say to what such a state of things, if unchecked, must come at last? As to the state of the currency, there had been, unfortunately, much difference of opinion upon it. But the Bank felt called upon to provide for its own safety, by narrowing its issues. And, what was the result? The spirit of speculation was checked;

and as a necessary result, those country banks which had been most rash and immoderate in aiding those speculations by advances, were ruined. But the evil did not stop here; for the ruin of a few bad and unstable banks, involved in difficulties many establishments of a similar nature, which were otherwise placed upon the most stable footing. A panic was spread throughout the country. The country banks, amounting to seven or eight hundred, applied to the Bank of England as their only reservoir, so that the Bank of England was assailed upon every side. Seven or eight hundred drains were at once opened through her—gold was to flow from her into the country. The Bank of England was, in consequence, placed in a state of the greatest difficulty and embarrassment. He would ask whether this was a situation in which the country banks ought to be allowed to stand? whether it was safe or convenient that they should remain upon such a footing? He maintained that it was not. It was his opinion—an opinion not hastily formed, but the result of long and anxious observation—that a permanent state of cash payments, and a circulation of one and two pound notes, could not co-exist. He would put his argument into the form of a simple proposition.—If there were in any country a paper currency of the same denomination as coin, the paper and the coin could not circulate together: the paper would drive out the coin. Let crown notes be made, and we should never see crown pieces; make half-crown notes, and a half-crown would not remain in circulation. Allow one-pound notes to circulate, and we should never see a sovereign. It was very well known, indeed, that in 1821 and 1822, when the Bank of England felt a very laudable anxiety to establish a gold circulation, and had actually endeavoured to saturate the country with gold, such was the indifference for the precious metal, that the parcels of gold coin which they sent down by one mail were returned by another. If this, then, was a right and just description, to what inference did it lead? He did not speak it to the disparagement of the country bankers, when he said, that they had endeavoured, and very naturally, to put out as much of their paper as they could. They might have had gold by them to some extent; but if cautious and prudent—and he was sorry to say, that some of them had shown themselves not to be so, although he believed that the country banks in general were managed with a great deal of prudence and discretion—but if prudent and cautious, they always placed their chief reliance on the Bank of England. And not only did the provincial banks of England thus rely on it, but even the banks of Scotland, and the national bank of Ireland, looked to it as their security. He would ask, then, any reasonable person, if it was fair or just that the Bank of England should be expected to provide gold for those various applicants, no matter under what circumstances they should seek for it—no matter whether the exchanges were favourable or not to this country? So long, indeed, as the national bank had the advantage of having an exclusive trade, perhaps something in the way of a sacrifice might be reasonably expected from it: but after having, in the most disinterested manner, surrendered a part of its monopoly in which it was greatly interested, the Bank naturally expected to be relieved from a liability which tended greatly to embarrass, if not to injure it. It was, under any circumstances, unnatural to require that the Bank of England should be the means of protecting and securing all the country banks which, if persevered in, might one day have the effect of involving the establishment of serious difficulties. Why, he asked, should the Bank of England be obliged to insure all the other banks in the country? Why not, on the contrary, oblige each country bank to insure itself, by having in its possession, or at its command, a certain portion of coin of the realm, to answer the demand which might be made upon it, in cases of emergency? Allusions had been made, in the course of the discussion to the effects of unfavourable harvests, both with reference to our gold currency, and to our interference with the corn laws. He would ask, on the other hand, what must be the nature of a system, which, with a favourable harvest, and at a period of profound peace, was capable of producing such pain and distress as had been lately experienced? The House had gone far in their endeavours to restore a sound metallic currency to the country; and he would ask, whether they were prepared to hazard the disgrace of stopping short in their career, by continuing the circulation of the one and two pound notes? He trusted that the measures brought forward by his right hon. friend would be felt deserving the support of

those gentlemen who were not generally in the habit of voting with his majesty's ministers. This was a question of the greatest magnitude, of the most vital interest, to the country; and his right hon. friend was well warranted in saying, that in the event of its being negatived, he should not envy the responsibility of any person placed in his right hon. friend's situation, who would have to manage the finances of the country, while the state of their currency was left to the chapter of accidents. One of the great evils which they were called upon to correct was, the excessive issue of paper. This had been productive of the greatest distress. It had been the destruction of confidence between all classes of society. It had caused the ruin of thousands of innocent individuals. It had given rise to fluctuations in our currency which were sometimes in favour of the debtor and sometimes of the creditor; but frequently involved both in misery and distress. Nothing but disgrace and danger would attend a deviation from the correct principles of currency which parliament had solemnly recognized. They should consider, then, the continuance of the circulation of one and two pound notes, as by no means fair. Neither could it be considered safe or advantageous, in a time of war. And he begged to ask, whether, when it was found that such a system was productive of so much general and individual suffering, there was any particular branch of our commerce which could justify its continuance. He was surprised to hear his hon. friend over the way assert, that if this measure was carried, it would involve the whole of the agricultural interests into distress equal to that which they had before experienced. If he was not aware that the hon. member had spent the recess in the country, he should have thought, from what he had said, that he possessed no knowledge whatever of recent events. He would ask, whether the hon. member had passed through any country town or district, in which a country bank had not failed? He would ask him, whether he had not seen the effect produced, not only on the shopkeepers and traders, but also on every class of farmers, by such failure? Where did the farmers themselves transact their business but with the country bankers; and how many gentlemen had been obliged to postpone the collection of their rents, in consequence of the losses sustained by their tenants, by the failure of country banks; not only in towns, but even in villages where the wages of labour were paid in the notes of the country bankers. What, then, must be the overwhelming misery of those persons who were visited by the sudden privation of the means of supplying their weekly wants and necessities? This distress had overtaken the farmer and labourer, and in a still greater degree the manufacturers and artizans of the country. And here he would advert to an expression used by a noble lord opposite, that the proposed measure would have the effect of bringing back again the agricultural distresses which existed before the year 1822. Need he tell the noble lord or his hon. friend, that there was a necessary connection between those who consumed and those who supplied agricultural produce? Was it necessary that he should point out the fact, that a fall in the demand for the labour of manufacturers must necessarily produce a decrease of consumption; and that the one must of necessity regulate the other? What was it that occasioned the revival of the agricultural interests in 1822? He maintained that it arose principally from the revival of the manufacturing interests, and from the employment of thousands, who had, for a considerable time, been deprived of an opportunity of supporting themselves by their labour. The increased means with which they were furnished necessarily brought about the increase of consumption; and, looking to the opposite side of this argument, he felt convinced, that the manufacturing distresses which were now so generally felt, must have the effect of diminishing the demand for the agricultural produce of the country. It was the natural course of things; that, in such a fluctuating state of our currency, all classes of society must, in their turn, be affected by it; and therefore the sooner we got rid of that fluctuation, and returned to a sound, healthy, and permanent circulating medium, the better would it be for the community at large. If they wished to prove the value of a steady unchangeable currency, they had it in the example of France. That country had been twice invaded by a foreign army; her capital had been twice taken possession of, and she had been obliged to pay large sums to foreign countries for corn; but she had a steady metallic currency, and however such visitations might have affected the great—however the extensive contractor might

have been injured or ruined—the body of the population remained unmolested—The storm might have uprooted the forest tree, but it passed over without injuring the humble reed. This was to be attributed to the permanent footing upon which the currency of that country had been established. If the object of his right hon. friend was carried into execution, it would have the effect of making the country banker as sensitive on the subject of the exchanges, and as watchful of any unfavourable turn which might take place in them as the Bank of England now was. He would be obliged to watch the circumstances calculated to bring gold into, or send it out of the country; and this caution being timely impressed upon him, the danger would be passed; there would then be no fear of any convulsion or agitation in the country, as the interest of each banker would compel him to provide himself for any coming emergency; or, in other words, every country bank would feel an equal interest with the Bank of England in watching the state of the currency, and guarding against its fluctuations—If, then, it was necessary for the best interests of the country, that the currency should be established on a sound and solid foundation, and that the country banks should be prevented from drawing the metallic currency out of the kingdom, by the issue of these small notes, the next question was, whether this was a proper time for carrying the measure into execution? But before he touched upon that, perhaps it would be proper that he should make one preliminary observation respecting the country banks. He was far from being hostile to these banks; on the contrary he thought they would be of great service to the country if placed under proper regulations. He wished to relieve these banks themselves from the consequences of their own proceedings, from the liability of each, to be ruined by the failure of others. But they must be prevented from issuing paper as low as the highest denomination of the metallic currency of the country. They must not be permitted to issue these one-pound notes — the one-pound corresponding to the sovereign, the highest denomination of metallic currency. Such issues amounted in reality to the assuming the powers of the prerogative. Let them continue to issue paper, and to extend and act upon their credit; but they must not be allowed to issue these small notes, which was trenching upon the prerogative. Then he came to the point, whether this was the proper time for providing, by law, for the gradual and progressive withdrawing of these small notes? Some gentlemen had contended, that this was not a fit time. Now he contended that this was the most proper time, when so much of this sort of currency was actually afloat, and the bankers were smarting under the consequences of their over issues. Was it when a drinker of ardent spirits was intoxicated, that you could persuade him to give over that habit? No; but when he was sober, and when he was suffering under the effects of his previous intemperance. Those notes were at present already greatly curtailed by the failure of a hundred country banks and from other causes. The country banks had, at this time, a large stock of gold in their hands drawn from the Bank of England. They had found it necessary, for their own safety, to lay in stores of gold and Bank of England notes. Now, therefore, was the most convenient time for providing, by law, for the gradual extinction of this small note circulation. If they waited until the present difficulties were passed, they would soon find that these notes, which were at present withdrawn, would soon be issued again. Now they had actually got the gold in their coffers: it was in the country; and this was the moment to provide that it should not again be so readily exported. They must also remember the difficulties they would have to experience from these country banks, in any attempt to intermeddle with their notes and profits, in case the issuing of these small notes were, to a great extent, resumed. If they postponed the commencement of this measure, would any hon. gentleman assure him that they would ever begin at all? They could not expect a more favourable opportunity for commencing the good work than the present. If they allowed it to escape, and these notes were again extensively issued, it would be said, why did they not resort to this measure when the issues of these notes were so much curtailed? If the adoption of measures for putting the currency upon a sound and solid foundation were to be resisted by such arguments as he had heard that night, there was an end of all hope of securing a proper coinage and standard of value. When these country banks had only such a small number of partners, they were

naturally led, by views of private interest, to neglect the just principles of banking. But if a bank consisted of, suppose two hundred partners, they would be tied down by rules which would not admit of these ruinous speculations, and their affairs would be conducted on the genuine principles of banking. He allowed that it would be a great improvement, if, under a proper system, chartered banks were established, with only a limited liability. It would, no doubt, induce many persons of great credit and fortune, to invest their money in shares of such banks. But the Bank objected to the extension of this limited liability, and had stipulated that the banks of Scotland and of Ireland should not possess this privilege. His hon. friend, the member for Taunton, had recommended the giving to England a metallic currency on a more extensive basis than could be obtained by the recall of the one and two pound notes. He agreed with his hon. friend, that it would be desirable that the currency should be rested on a firm and secure basis; for himself, he was bound to confess that he entirely differed from his late friend, Mr. Ricardo, as to the basis upon which the currency of the country ought safely and properly to rest; and he believed that if that gentleman, ingenious as he was, had been the sole director of the Bank of England, the country would, before this, have witnessed the stoppage of that establishment. He had paid much attention to the subject of currency generally, and he did think that Mr. Ricardo's view of the question had been a wrong one; and, while he was upon the subject, he might as well observe, that he should be glad to pursue, and would pursue, some further inquiry, perhaps before the Board over which he presided, into the best mode of improving the suggestion thrown out a few nights since by the hon. member for Taunton, and introducing, in some shape or other, silver as a legal tender, so as to give an additional security to the currency of the country.—An hon. member had said, in rather sweeping terms, that for much of the late wild speculation which had been carrying on throughout the country, ministers were chiefly to blame. Now, the House would recollect when it was that the great bulk of these speculations first commenced. It was in the spring of last year. To refer, standing where he did, to what had been said by lord Liverpool in another place, would be contrary to order; but he had taken the trouble to refresh his memory as to the precise terms of what he had said himself. In February last—in the very commencement of those speculations—he had used this particular expression in speaking of them; "that the lottery was a safe adventure, compared with the mass of those in which persons were then engaging." Again, in the month of March, speaking of the speculations, he had distinctly declared it to be his opinion, that those who engaged in them would find themselves disappointed. Unfortunately, those to whom this advice had been addressed had disregarded all warning. They had rushed, in contempt of all caution, on to their own destruction. But, although it would be irregular in him to refer to the precise terms in which lord Liverpool had spoken upon the subject of those unfortunate speculations, yet he might say, the opinions delivered by that noble lord had neither been less unfavourable to them, nor less strongly expressed, than his own. So far from having adopted any measures calculated to foster or assist dealings of that hazardous character, he did most distinctly affirm, that government had done every thing in its power to discourage the speculations, and remove the infatuation.

Mr. *R. Gordon* begged to remind the House, that the right hon. gentleman, who now so fiercely attacked the one and two pound notes, had been, in the year 1822, a member of that very cabinet which came down to the House and introduced them. All parties then were making complaints, especially the agricultural interest. Persons were declaring that they could not pay their rent, their labourers, and their taxes; and then ministers had come down, and proposed, as a remedy for the evil, that very measure which they now desired to abrogate. He was charged with having got some new lights upon the subject. That was a mistake; it was the hon. gentleman opposite whose views had been changed. He had chosen to remain in a very small minority upon the question of passing Mr. Peel's bill; because he thought, as he thought still, that it would be impossible to pay in gold what had been borrowed in paper: and therefore he wished ministers to pause, and reconsider the steps which they were taking. He was glad to hear the right hon. gentleman speak in the terms in which he had expressed himself of country bankers;

but certainly, all those who sat near him had not treated that class of individuals quite so fairly. So far from the present distress having arisen from the issue of one and two pound notes by the country banks, he thought the country had derived very great relief from that issue. The observation which had been made about prerogative, seemed to him wholly unintelligible; for certainly, he could not perceive how the royal prerogative was a jot more endangered by a country banker's issuing a one-pound note than a five-pound note. He greatly regretted the measure which was to reduce the circulation of the country banks. After the failure of nearly eighty of those establishments had withdrawn a million and a half of notes from circulation, his firm opinion was, that any farther diminution would embarrass the country.

Mr. *Canning* said, that as the night was far advanced, and a number of gentlemen were understood to be still desirous of expressing their sentiments, he thought it would be most convenient that the question should be adjourned to Monday.

This motion being agreed to, the House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 13.

BANK CHARTER AND PROMISSORY NOTES ACTS.] The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved the order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate on the Bank Charter and Promissory Notes Acts. On the question being put, "That Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair,"

Sir *John Wrottesley* rose. It was, he said, necessary, before he entered more at large into the reasons why he wished to take the sense of the House upon the Speaker's leaving the chair, to state why he had not taken this course at an earlier moment. Now, there was a rational objection to that course being taken on Friday last; for then, properly enough, several gentlemen were anxious to hear the statement of the chancellor of the Exchequer, but at this moment the case was materially altered. All those who thought, as he did from the outset, that the project of the right hon. gentleman was impolitic, were bound to take the earliest stand against it. All those who, after hearing that statement, thought the right hon. gentleman's plan to be fraught with danger, ought to take their stand against it at the earliest opportunity which was afforded them. All those who thought that it would inevitably tend, not to remedy or to lessen, but greatly to increase all the existing evils, must also think with him in his view of the question. Upon all who entertained the opinions, of which he had given a summary, he now called for support, while he resisted the Speaker's leaving the chair on the present occasion [hear hear]. If he could presume to have another call upon the House, it would be, not to proceed further in this business without hearing and pondering deliberately upon the arguments which would be adduced against the motion; and in offering those which his own mind and experience suggested, he most anxiously begged their indulgence for a patient hearing. The House was, he had always found, willing to listen to those who advocated the interests of any great body of men who were likely to be affected by their legislative proceedings; and he had found them more attentive, when any individual of their body claimed their notice, when he was himself materially interested in the question at issue; and still more so, when circumstances transpired which affected, not only the hearts of respectable men, but their honour and integrity. With all the patience, kindness, and indulgence which the House could extend, he still felt that he had a task of great difficulty to perform. He was most deeply impressed with the importance of the subject, and with his incompetence to reward hon. gentlemen for their attention, by making it entertaining; and if they did not think fit to listen to his arguments, he should be under the necessity of giving up, in despair, the discharge of a duty, which he felt most anxious to perform. Never was there a question which better deserved the most laborious consideration; and never did he feel the sense of his own inability bear so heavily upon him. He was well aware that in the House, and, indeed, in the country, there existed great difference of opinion, whether this question ought or ought not to have been brought before the country. One of his majesty's ministers had claimed credit for placing the subject in the front of the king's Speech, and it had been urged by many, that discussion could not, at all events, have been avoided. He was not of that opinion. He did not say, that the topic ought not to have been collaterally introduced. It might merely have been

mentioned, though not from the throne, and an expectation might have been added, that the evil would be best remedied by leaving it alone—by not intermeddling by legislation, but by leaving the case to the energy and good sense of the people of England. The effect would have been, that things, instead of getting rapidly worse, would have gradually mended; and it might have been hoped, that the existing melancholy situation of the country would have been altogether relieved, and the prevailing distressing embarrassments eventually been productive of great public good, though attended with much private calamity. Certainly, it might have been proper to mention this state of things incidentally; and if that mention had been made by some honourable gentleman unconnected with government, the consequences would not, perhaps, have been injurious. The mischief had been done by rendering it an authorised and official statement by the king's ministers. That letter, that cruel letter he might well call it, had issued from the Treasury; and if it had not been brought forward with so much formality, its genuineness might well have been doubted, or at all events it might have been thought that some clerk of the Treasury had delivered out the foul copy instead of the fair one. In such a composition, it was at least to be expected that the ordinary rules of grammar should have been attended to; but it was a production that would have disgraced even a school-boy, for the common concord between the verb and the nominative case was wholly disregarded. However, the production had never been disavowed, and for this reason principally he looked upon it as genuine. The charges it contained were important, and he must add, extremely unfounded and injurious. In the first place, it accused all the country bankers with having fostered, aided, and abetted, the rage for speculation; whereas it had been said on former occasions, and not denied, that they were the only persons who had not joined in these wild speculations. In fact, it was part of their business, by every possible means, to ascertain whether their customers were or were not speculators. The moment they found a man beginning to speculate, it was the duty, and the constant practice, of the country banker to warn him; and if he did not follow the advice given, the next step was either to limit or to close his account. Therefore, the assertion of the letter was as unfounded as it was cruel; and indeed it might be looked upon as one of the harshest things that had ever been said of a respectable body of men. What was the fact upon this subject, as appeared upon undeniable evidence? Speculation began in a district of the kingdom where actually no local notes were circulated. The earliest speculation was in cotton in the towns of Manchester and Liverpool, where no part of the currency consisted of country bank notes. Where next did the wild spirit of speculation shew itself? Upon the Stock Exchange in the city of London. Would any body, then, venture to say, that the mad speculations of the last year were really owing to the excessive issues by country bankers? He sincerely believed that no set of men more sincerely lamented them, or more endeavoured to avoid them, by warning their customers constantly not to have any thing to do with them. "But," said the king's ministers, who brought forward this unfounded accusation, "it was we who warned the country against the consequences of mad speculation." Was it indeed? Where had they done so? He was prepared to show, that they were the parties to blame, for at least a part of those difficulties. It was in the latter end of the year 1824 that these speculations began to show themselves in their more striking colours; and it was then that doubts arose, whether it was not necessary to consider the application of the act, commonly called the Bubble act, to these proceedings. The House knew that upon the explosion of the celebrated South Sea-scheme, the parliament of that day enacted a law, which, if put into full operation, would render it almost impossible for any man to embark in these wild schemes. In consequence of the severe penalties of this Bubble act, many years elapsed without the appearance of any of these delusive schemes. At last, in a time of scarcity, when the public thought the bakers and millers were taking advantage of the dearth, mills of a particular construction were set up by companies to grind grain, and to bake bread on a saving scale. A case arose out of these, he believed it was that of "the King against Webb and another," in which lord Ellenborough was called upon to revive the penalties of the Bubble act; but that high judicial personage declined doing so, and rather

put a different construction upon the law than that which was previously understood to attach to it. Things stood in this shape till the year before last, when the lord chancellor maintained somewhat of a different opinion from lord Ellenborough, and dropped doctrines which differed from those which prevailed in Webb's case. Under these circumstances, what was more necessary than for the government to bring in a bill to declare what the law really was? The effect of this declaratory enactment would have been, if not to crush, at least to restrain, these wild speculations, and so to correct the system that tended to their establishment, as to expose the parties who engaged in them to the penalties which lord Ellenborough refrained from directing against them. The government, so far from doing this, in fact did just enough to prevent any body else from pursuing such an object; for the attorney-general gave notice of his intention to bring in a bill; the bill was brought in; it was laid upon the table; and neglected during the whole of the session; while the spirit of speculation was allowed to proceed undeterred, and to make dreadful ravages over the whole of the kingdom. God forbid, then, that ministers should be allowed to shift the blame, which ought to rest only upon them, to the shoulders of innocent country bankers. The next subject to which he wished to call the attention of the House was, the proposed repeal of that part of the Bank charter which, until the year 1833, authorized the issuing of small notes. On what terms had the Bank of England its charter, and on what authority was that privilege secured? The terms were, that they should be enabled to issue small notes, and the authority was the faith of parliament. What was the privilege of the country bankers respecting the same power, and how was it conferred? To issue small notes likewise, and upon the same faith of parliament. When would the Bank charter expire? In the year 1833. When would the small country notes cease to be legally issuable? In 1833 also. The privileges of the Bank of England and the country banks being in this respect alike, and delegated equally upon the faith of parliament, how happened it that the Bank were still to have the power of issuing small notes, and the country banks none? See the injustice, the partiality, as well as the cruelty of this treatment of the country bankers! Had parliament, in the year 1822, repealed the privilege, as it was intimated that they meant to do, then the country bankers would have been prepared for that result. But this was not the course pursued. They were, on the contrary, entrapped: they were led into a scrape; and now the whole system thus formally and definitely sanctioned, was to be retraced and reversed without the smallest valid reason for the change. It was ridiculous to talk of giving them three years to alter their practice; for now that the stamping of their notes was refused, those at present in circulation were not calculated to last eighteen months; so that the country bankers must at once prepare to withdraw their small paper circulation, and make instant arrangements for cash payments. He supposed it would be contended, as indeed had already been the case, that the country banks had forfeited their claim for equal justice; that they had abused their power of circulating small notes, by their over-issues, and the excess to which they had carried it. Well, then, let the conduct of the Bank of England be examined, and the same test applied to that corporation. Had the latter never abused its power by over-issues? Could the chancellor of the Exchequer deny, that what with the government, and what with the Bank, the paper circulation of the country became at one time so depreciated, that the relative value of the guinea in gold and in paper, was as 27*s*. or 28*s*. to 21*s*. Why not then, if this were a valid ground for depriving a party of a charter, have broken up the Bank privilege? But, he denied the assertion that the country banks had over-issued; he knew that some persons entertained a different opinion, but he challenged them to the proof. The country notes in circulation in the year 1825 were double in amount those of 1822. Be it so; and he could tell the reason why. Almost all these small notes were employed in carrying on the provision trade; for general mercantile transactions were notoriously conducted through the medium of bills of exchange, the amount of which far exceeded that of all the small country notes in the kingdom. Then, if these notes represented, as they did, the value of these provisions, they must necessarily partake, in their amount, of the changes

in the price of the commodities for which they were exchanged. Look, then, to facts, and it would be found, that the price of corn in 1825 greatly exceeded the price of it in 1822. In some places it was double, and the value of cattle more than doubled, in the same period. This augmentation of value in commodities necessarily increased the amount of the notes in which they were to be paid. The country customer who wanted to buy a certain quantity of corn, or a certain number of cattle, on a market day, went to his local banker, and obtained the money which was necessary to make such purchases. The House would, however, see, that, for obvious reasons, money had since last July become scarce, and consequently the transactions of business had become more circumscribed. It became necessary, therefore, for public convenience, to lessen the number of five-pound notes in circulation, and to increase the issue of those of smaller amounts.—One point had been urged with considerable force; and it was certainly calculated to make an impression upon the public mind by appealing to the best feelings of our nature. It had been said, that, on the failure of a country bank, the utmost misery was brought upon the lower orders, who were thus deprived of their petty savings, hoarded up in the one and two pound notes of the firm which had failed. A most piteous case had been thus made out by the chancellor of the Exchequer, and assuredly those who did not feel for the sufferings of the poor, under such circumstances, deserved to be ranked among the basest of mankind. But, he begged to call the attention of the House to the fact, whether parliament had not, upon this subject, done every thing in the way of legislation that was necessary or even possible. First the labourer was not bound to take country notes; or if he had taken them, he had the power of immediately repairing to the counter of the firm, and of obtaining sovereigns in exchange. The value of a sovereign might be reduced to 18s. or even lower, and in that case the poor man could only obtain provisions to that amount, but he always was sure to obtain the full value of a country note. If he did not want to spend it, he could take it to the savings' bank, and invest it in government securities. In fact, with all these cautions, even if a labourer took a country note, it was his own fault if he kept it in his possession more than twenty-four hours. Parliament, in fact, had done all it could to protect him, and it was little less than folly and weakness for the House to attempt to pass statutes to protect him against the consequences of his own heedlessness. But, the great difficulties which must attend the contemplated change in the system of paper-money were these:—The one-pound notes were (except in Lancashire) the great medium of payment for manufacturing labour throughout the kingdom. The country banker took the manufacturer's bill upon his correspondent in London or Bristol, or wherever else he dealt, and gave him his own notes in return, with which the manufacturer paid his workmen, who, as he had before said, obtained their necessary supplies at full value for this paper. Now, he did not mean to say that the business of the country could not be carried on without these small notes; but he was quite satisfied, that if they were withdrawn, a very different quantity of business would be transacted. It should be remembered, that a great deal of the money drawn from the country, particularly in the shape of rents, was transmitted to the landlord in London, and spent during a large portion of the year in the metropolis: this operation must go on; but it was impossible that with it could be conducted the same extent of country business. And, if the latter could not be transacted on the same scale, then what became of the labouring poor who must be thrown out of employment? Was there no sympathy for the large classes who were dependent for support on manufacturing industry? What medium of circulation did they propose to substitute for that which would be withdrawn by the departure of these small notes? None, that he could understand. He had certainly heard a good deal of the improvement which was to arise in the banking system from these changes, and that in a short time joint-stock companies would rise up in the country. He did not believe a word of it. They might probably have branch banks, from the Bank of England, in Lancashire: they might have them also in some of the manufacturing districts of the county of York; but, in any other of the manufacturing counties such establishments were not likely to appear, unless government granted a charter—(and this the Bank of England would take care to prevent)—or unless a parcel of adventurers

were found ready to act together in the banking trade, with little or no property at stake. A pretty system this would be for the country—one, which so far from mitigating the existing evil, would greatly aggravate and extend it in every quarter. He had already argued, that the country banks, so far from doing any of the mischief under which the public had so lately suffered, had greatly tended to reduce it; and by bringing capital into particular manufacturing situations, had considerably tended to local improvements, promoted the general industry of the people; and, referring again to the letter from the Treasury to the Bank—he meant to that part of it, which, as it were, summed up the character of the country banks—he for one was not disposed even, to condescend to reply to the imputation. The principles which regulated these institutions, their stability and their solvency, had been declared by those on the spot, who best knew their credit and honour, whose means of judging were declared indisputable; and those declarations were a sufficient answer to the calumnies of those, whose animadversions upon their conduct, could only arise from ignorance on the one hand, or interested prejudice on the other. Hoping to have the assistance of every gentleman who apprehended danger from the proposition now under consideration—a danger which was every twenty-four hours growing greater, and its progress alone capable of being stopped by an abandonment of it—he reiterated his appeal to all those who thought as he did upon the question, for their support in resisting the Speaker's leaving the chair. But, if he were not confident of having this support—if he were conscious that he should stand alone in the division, still he would do his duty to the utmost of his power, in averting the evil which must follow the adoption of the chancellor of the Exchequer's plan, and the extent of which it was impossible for any human being to calculate.

Mr. Alderman *Thompson* said, he was extremely anxious to take an opportunity of expressing his sentiments on this question, which he considered of the first importance, as it involved the safety, nay, the existence, of every man's property, of whatsoever kind that property might be. He had, ever since he had the honour of a seat in that House, given his support to ministers in all their measures relating to the commercial policy of the country. With reference to the measures now under consideration, he could only say, that he agreed with them as to the principle, but differed with them as to the period appointed for carrying them into execution. In the first place, he agreed that the present embarrassments were partly attributable to an over-issue of paper currency, and partly to the general spirit of speculation which had so unfortunately prevailed. He was inclined to think that the excess of this bank paper had increased all these speculations; necessarily so, indeed, from the superabundance of money which they threw into the market. The excitement thus given, in the years 1822 and 1823, by the paper circulation, diffused a superficial currency throughout the country, which was eagerly caught at. On reference to the stamp returns for the country banks, for the years 1823, 1824, and 1825, the issues of their notes appeared to have doubled, as compared with the three preceding years; that of the year 1825 being by far the largest of all. The country banks, in this state of things, readily accommodated the manufacturer, who gave a high price in his turn; and this concurring impulse, at the close of the year 1825, had certainly carried the paper circulation to a forced and unnatural height. In this state a re-action occurred; for the chief resources of the country banker were, after all, in London—there he must depend for his money, and for obtaining cash for his discounts; but, when this re-action came the change was great. It was first clearly visible in the failure of an extensive banker in a western district, which was followed by a similar occurrence in a northern; and these were attended by a general rush upon all bankers, whether solvent or otherwise. Seventy bankers either failed at once, or their paper was thrown into a state of abeyance. Calculating their issues at 50,000*l.* each, which was, he believed, much under the mark, 3, 500,000*l.* of the circulating medium was in the short space of three months withdrawn from the country. Assuming 20,000,000*l.* to be the whole circulation of the country, and adding to the 3,500,000*l.* already with drawn, the additional amount of the paper money which must have disappeared in consequence of the recent shock, there would be a reduction of nearly 50 per cent within six months in the currency of the country. At all events, he thought himself safe in

assuming that there were now 6,000,000*l.* of paper-currency less than the public possessed six months ago. How was the vacuum thus created proposed to be supplied by the chancellor of the Exchequer? By gold, said the right hon. gentleman. Where was this gold to be obtained? There was no way of obtaining the precious metals but by exports; and of what were these exports to consist? Their own manufactures were not in demand on the continent, neither were the foreign commodities which they possessed. Cotton was not in request abroad, nor sugar, nor coffee: in fact, none of their colonial produce. Though prices had fallen 20 per cent, business was still in a state of great stagnation. Every body acquainted with the commercial business of this great metropolis, knew, that within the last week, not one in ten could negociate upon the Royal Exchange the most undeniable bills he had to offer for discount. How, then, was this new measure to operate? They all knew, that the avowed intention of it, was the speedy suppression of small notes; but they also knew, that by far the greater portion of the trade of the country was carried on through the medium of these same notes, and that the largest circulation of them was in the most active manufacturing districts. He could, from his own knowledge of one part of the country, name a district where the total monthly payments amounted to no less than 200,000*l.*, and this was uniformly paid in the one and two pound local notes. They could easily imagine what would be the effect of withdrawing this amount of circulation from one spot of the country. Besides, they should remember, that notwithstanding the general want of confidence which prevailed so recently respecting these local notes, how few comparatively had failed, though the demand upon all must have been immense, from the nature and extent of the panic. They ought to consider whether the manufacturer was at all likely to carry on his trade, if the assistance of the country banker were thus suddenly withdrawn. It might be said, that the same accommodation would be given to the solvent applicant after the resumption of cash payments as before. This he denied; for the banker would feel a very different disposition to discount the manufacturer's bills, when he had to advance the money in sovereigns, from that which he had evinced when his notes would answer the same purpose. Entertaining these opinions, he must oppose the present proposition, believing it to be one which, instead of having a beneficial tendency, was likely to create a convulsion from one end of the country to the other. As to the idea of throwing open the Bank charter, in expectation of the establishment of joint-stock companies, it was a mere delusion, and must completely fail. It was a great mistake to imagine, that the solvency or solidity of a bank would be measured by any estimate formed upon the number of its partners. No. The prudential mode of conducting a bank, rather than the extended amount of its capital, would, as it ought to do, influence the opinion of its stability. Undoubtedly, much good would arise if the Bank of England established branches; but, until that event occurred, it would, in his opinion, be an act of great folly in the House of Commons to curtail by measures of this sort the circulation of the country still further than late events had accomplished. To proscribe the country bank paper at the end of three years by a new law, was practically to put an end to it at once; for every banker must instantly withdraw his small notes, as fast as he could. This, he contended, would, in the present state of the country, be attended with evil; and, therefore, he opposed the project. It would, in his opinion, operate in a considerable degree, to destroy confidence; and it ought to be recollected, that it was much easier to destroy than to restore confidence.

Mr. *Leycester* said, that, instead of complaining of the conduct of his majesty's government in endeavouring to put an end to the mischievous prerogative exercised by the country bankers, of adding to the circulating medium of the country at their pleasure, he was disposed to give them the greatest credit for the effort. That prerogative of the country bankers was the cause of all the evil which we at present endured: that prerogative had occasioned the redundance of paper with which the country was inundated: that prerogative, by occasioning such a redundance of paper, had increased the price of labour and of corn: that prerogative, by occasioning such a redundance of paper, had forced the 3 per cents, up to 95, which had given birth to all the extravagant speculations by which the nation had been brought to the verge of ruin. The principles on which that mischievous prerogative of

the country bankers was exercised, were radically wrong; and opposed to the most important principles upon which the currency of every country ought to be founded. The most important of those principles was unity in the power of issuing currency, and in the power of controlling the issuing of currency. There ought to be only one officina for the issuing of currency; there ought to be only one officina for the control of that issue. Where the power was vested in one body, the knowledge of the amount already in circulation would necessarily lead to caution in further issues, or to prudence in calling in that already issued. But the issuing of currency was intrusted to the discretion of a number of independent bodies like country banks, the consequences must necessarily be most injurious. They could know nothing of the amount of circulating medium already in the country. They would pay no attention whatever to the state of our exchanges with foreign countries, for the purpose of ascertaining whether our circulating medium was redundant on the one hand, or deficient on the other. They would not be aware of the operation of all these circumstances on the public prosperity; or, if they did, they would, in too many cases, deem it an absurd sacrifice of their own interests to contract their issues; and would think it a duty which they owed to themselves, to issue as much of their paper as they found their immediate neighbourhood was disposed to receive. What, however, must be the result of such conduct? Depreciation of their paper in the first instance, and eventually bankruptcy. Such must be the inevitable consequences of leaving the power of issuing an unrestrained amount of money-paper, of leaving such a mischievous prerogative in the hands of a mob of country bankers; and the House might depend upon it, that a mob in the mint was calculated to be at least as destructive as a mob at the helm of the state. He was sincerely glad, therefore, that government had proposed a measure by which the prerogative in question was to be taken away. All he regretted was, that they had not proposed the measure sooner, and that they did not now propose to carry it further. Why not sweep away the five pound, as well as the one and the two pound notes? They were almost equally objectionable; and he had no doubt that in another year ministers would come down to the House with a confession, that they had not proceeded sufficiently far, and with a proposition for treating the five-pound notes as they were now proposing to treat those of smaller value. Having now expressed his sentiments with regard to that which it was intended to undo, he should proceed to state his opinion with regard to that which it was intended to do. The recommendation from government to the Bank of England to establish branch banks, in certain parts of the kingdom, had his entire approbation. The Bank of England were aware of the amount and effect of their own issues; they were aware of the state of the foreign exchanges; they were aware of the circumstances and situation of the country; and they would, no doubt, regulate their conduct on the soundest principles, and act sagaciously and advantageously. But there, he was sorry to say, his concurrence in the active measures proposed by his majesty's government terminated. As to the joint-stock companies which it was proposed to establish, they were liable to many of the peculiar objections which lay against country banks at the present moment, with this additional circumstance of evil—that as the individuals of whom they would be composed would be less responsible, as they would be less exposed to hazard, their avidity for gain, and the rashness of their proceedings, would be proportionably great. The consequence, he feared, would be, that when the time came, as come it would, at which their paper must be converted into gold, their poor creditors would fare worse than ever, and would, as it were, be cut off with a shilling. As to any enlargement of the existing country banks, to which it was supposed the measure would give birth, he did not think that any such enlargement would ever take place. Substantial banks would not be disposed to admit new partners, because they would not be disposed to share their profits with other persons; and unsubstantial banks would not be disposed to admit new partners, because that would be to generate a report of their unsubstantiability—to hoist a flag of distress. But even if the contrary should turn out to be the case, a larger number of partners would not necessarily imply a larger capital; a larger number of partners would not necessarily imply a better character; for there would be more black sheep among twenty persons than among six.

Thus, such extensions would still leave country banks liable to all the objections to which they were liable at the present moment. They would be as liable to be seduced by the hope of profit to an over-issue of their paper; they would be as ignorant of the amount of circulating medium in circulation; they would be as inattentive to the state of the foreign exchanges, and to the other circumstances operating on the currency of the country. What, then, would be the consequence? Those which he had before described:—a depreciation of their paper in the first instance; and eventually bankruptcy. Against this he knew that the case of the extended partnership banks in Scotland would be quoted: but, how was it known that the success of those banks might not be imputed to local causes, and those very different from a mere extension of partnerships? Might not the cause of it be found in the national character of the Scotch for prudence and sagacity in their commercial transactions? Perhaps, there was more caution used amongst them in lending and borrowing, than was to be found amongst the same class of monied men in England. In this country there was an universal cupidity amongst almost all classes of capitalists for borrowing and lending, and for lending and borrowing. All rushed precipitately into the vortex of speculation—"some to undo, and some to be undone;" but, in none was there the same prudent foresight which marked the money-transactions of Scotland. Why not, he again asked, attribute the success of extended partnership banks to that cause, as well as to the mere fact that they were extended? For his own part, he had no reliance upon this part of the plan.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, that if this measure had been proposed by way of trial, he should not have felt surprised at it, or at the manner in which it had been viewed by some hon. members; but, he must own that he lamented to find that it was proposed by his majesty's ministers, as founded upon part of his majesty's Speech, and that part, too, which referred to the distressed state of the country. As a remedy, or even a palliative, for that distress, it was nothing—nay, it was worse than nothing; for it served but to aggravate the existing evil, and carry it to a still much greater extent. Far from allaying the degree of distrust and alarm that prevailed, it would, in his opinion, serve but to carry it still further. He did no tview this question as a party man, or with reference to party feeling of any kind. He looked at it as a representative of the city of London, who was in the habit of hearing, day after day, of the ruin and distress, in which so many of our merchants, manufacturers, and traders were involved. It was his wish to see, if possible, in the measure before the House, some remedy for those distresses—some palliative of the evils—something which would have the effect of restoring confidence; but, he confessed that, turn it which way he would, he could find none. In order to see how far the propositions of ministers were likely to be efficacious, let the House consider what was the situation in which the country was recently placed, and what was that in which it now stood. A very short time ago, they had felt that the shock in mercantile and commercial confidence had extended to the banks; that numbers of them were failing, and many others were threatened. In that state of the public alarm, something was to be done: and here he could not but say, that the country owed more thanks to the hon. member for Taunton, for his conduct on that occasion, than it did to ministers on the present. His speech at the meeting of merchants at the Mansion-house, and the resolutions there proposed, although they had been turned into ridicule, had done a great deal, if not to remedy the distress, at least to check a great portion of it which arose from, and to prevent a still greater portion which would arise from, a continuance of the want of confidence. To any measure of that kind his majesty's ministers could lay no claim. Most certainly they were not entitled to any praise for those they now proposed. Was this, he would ask, a time to take away the support which was derived from issues of small notes? What was our situation? Were we now suffering some dreadful calamity, the result of war, or famine, or earthquake? Nothing of the kind. Were we at the termination of a war, in which our finances had been greatly involved, and our resources crippled? Were we, in that state, called upon to make good a deficiency of some twenty millions? No such thing. Had we to pay ten or twelve millions for the purchase of foreign corn? No. What, then, was our situation? It was said, we had over-traded. That, very probably, was the case to a very great

extent; but, we had done so before without suffering to the same extent as at present. It was impossible that one portion of the trading or commercial part of the community could suffer without injuring the other. If the merchant suffered by over-trading, his distress extended to the manufacturer; and from him it proceeded to the other classes. This was, in a great degree, our situation at present. Now, thus circumstanced, what was best to be done? He would say, that the first step would be, if possible, to restore confidence. This was not to be done by force. People were not to be dragooned into confidence in banks, or any other establishments. The milder the means taken to ensure such a result, the more effectual would they prove. He did not believe confidence would be restored by such measures as those now before them. As to the situation of the country, and the remedy most effectual for restoring a sound state of currency, he entirely concurred in the view taken in the very able speech on Friday, of the hon. member for Taunton; for which he thought that hon. member was entitled to the thanks of the country. One part of that speech which was particularly deserving of attention, was that which related to a mixed currency. To that part, the president of the Board of Trade seemed to have paid particular attention; and he hoped that the House would soon hear some proposition from the right hon. gentleman on that subject. Why not, he would ask, as we had such large importations of silver from South America, bring it into circulation as a part of our currency, instead of being obliged to purchase sovereigns at a premium of one and a half per cent; or, what was the same, to purchase them by Bank paper, while the bullion of the Bank was uselessly hoarded up? Its issues of paper were thus increased, and the country injured by it; when, if the plan of the hon. member for Taunton was adopted, we might have the two currencies together. Upon this subject he would not dwell at present, further than to express a hope that the House would soon hear some proposition respecting it from the right hon. gentleman. One word as to an argument used in support of the present plan. It was urged, that if we did not come to the consideration of the evils of paper issues when in a state of suffering, we could not be induced to do so in a flourishing condition of our trade and commerce. This was the argument of the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer; and, no doubt, he would have the support of the gentlemen around him, and of many of those opposite; and they would agree that the measure could not be carried in a season of prosperity The argument was a bad one. He would say—let well alone. He did not mean to say, that we were well now; but we were comparatively so, to what we should be if this plan were adopted. If he thought it would have the effect of remedying any of the evils under which the country laboured, he would support it: he felt convinced that it would have a contrary effect. But, was the evil without any remedy? He thought it was not; and that which he would propose would be, to let the issue of our small notes not be meddled with, further than the taking of security to the extent of their issues. He did not care what kind of security that might be; whether stock, Exchequer-bills, or any other kind. All he thought necessary was, that it should be efficient, and such as to give satisfaction and confidence to the public. To the substantial banker, this could be no inconvenience. To the man who carried on business to the extent of 300,000*l.* it could not be difficult to find security for the issue of his small notes. That security would tend to his own advantage; because, the greatest danger of panic and alarm in times of distress arose from the holders of the small notes. These were found, in most cases, to begin the run; and the alarm they created extended itself to the holders of large notes: but, if the payment of the former was secured, such danger would be altogether prevented. He would not trouble the House further. The sum of his remarks was this—that the proposition of the chancellor of the Exchequer would be ineffectual; that instead of allaying, it would tend to increase the alarm; that it had already been productive of some, and would be productive of still greater mischief.

Mr. *John Smith* admitted, that the question was accompanied with considerable difficulties, which made him pause seriously as to the vote he should give; but, after having heard the speeches of some gentlemen on that and the former evening, he must say, that those difficulties were removed, and that he was prepared to vote with government in support of the proposition before the House.

Before he entered upon the general question, he must say a few words as to what fell from an hon. member, who had condemned the issue of paper en masse. He did not mean to justify the issue of paper, more particularly the issue of small notes, to the extent to which they had been carried; but he would appeal to the experience of all those who were acquainted with our manufacturing districts, and ask, whether the issue of notes in those districts had not had a most powerful and vivifying effect? In seasons of difficulty, they were of great use; but he would not say that the power to issue them had not been abused, and that, in times of panic, the loss had not fallen with great severity upon the labourer, from the suspension of payments by country banks. An hon. baronet had said, that, with reference to the one-pound notes, the labourer, or small trader, had the option of taking or refusing them at his pleasure; or that, having taken them, he might at once go to the Bank and demand gold, or Bank of England paper, in payment. It was true he might; but here was the mischief which it was desirable to avoid. The labourer, or small trader, dared not, in general, refuse those notes when tendered to him. It was well known, that in the country towns, the bankers were for the most part men of some influence; that they were magistrates of the county. It was also well known, that their notes were the chief, if not the only, circulating medium in that particular town or district. What labourer or tradesman dared to refuse one of the bank notes of his own town? If he had no fears of any ill effects from the banker or his friends, a motive of self-interest would induce him to take those notes; for there were few or none others offered in payment. So that, in fact, he had no option but to take, and he dared not refuse—except, perhaps, in a period of general panic, when such motives as he had alluded to would not affect him, and when he would be governed by his fears alone. It was here that a great part of the mischief lay; and it was here that a remedy was required; for as the taking of country small notes was almost forced upon the poorer classes, they ought to be effectually protected, or the issues altogether restricted. He had long been of opinion, that this species of circulation had been productive of great injury to the poorer classes—an injury, the nature of which no man could contemplate without the most painful emotions. For, what was the effect of the present small-note bill? It was, that any man, whether possessed of property or not, who took out a banker's licence, could issue one and two pound notes; and there were instances of persons who had taken out such licences, and become bankers, for no other purpose but that they might be able to issue notes to pay their own workmen. In proof of this, he could refer to what occurred in 1815, 1816, and 1817. It would be found, on inquiry, that numbers of individuals had taken out licenses as country bankers, who were so in no other sense of the word than that which he had described, and for the reasons which he had stated.—The question now before the House was one of very considerable importance. There was (and he regretted to be obliged to make the admission) a great deal of distress and alarm still in the public mind; and it would be bad reasoning, and would lead to dangerous results, to say that no alarm existed because none ought to exist. That it did exist could not be denied; and therefore it was that he felt the question before the House to be one which, at first, presented considerable doubts to his mind. Those doubts were, however, now removed, by some of the speeches he had heard; and he hoped that government would persevere in the measure they had proposed. He trusted that ministers would remember, that they acted under a grave responsibility, and that they were bound to provide that remedy which appeared to them most likely to protect the country from the evils which at present afflicted it.—He would now say a word on the correspondence between ministers and the Bank of England. If he might use a very common mode of expression, he would say he would lay a wager that the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade had nothing to do with the drawing up of the long statement sent to the Bank. He was certain that the right hon. gentleman, who understood every branch of commerce as well as or better than any other man in the country, could have had nothing to do with the production of a document which betrayed so much ignorance of what really was the state of the country, or at least the cause of part of the distress which it now felt. In the second paragraph of that paper blame was laid, in very plain language,

on the country banks, as being the cause of all the speculations of the last year. This was really too bad. What, he asked, had they done to merit so serious a charge as this? He begged most distinctly to deny the fact. He could say, for he knew the fact, that the respectable bankers of Manchester and Liverpool had given no encouragement to the speculations which had taken place in those towns. The plain meaning of the letter was, that the banks had lent themselves to support such speculations. This was incorrect. In those speculations which had made us the laughing-stock of other countries, and of each other, the banks had nothing to do. The language, therefore, of that paper was not appropriate, when applied, in a period of alarm, to a body of men who might have been imprudent, but who had done no injury—on the contrary, who had been a benefit—to the country. It was true, that some of the speculations had the effect of causing a greater importation of iron, of cotton, of silk, and other articles, than it was prudent to have on hand at once; but even if some of the banks had been parties to such speculations, or were the means of encouraging them, which, if true, was only to a very limited extent, still the banks as a body did not deserve the censure which the letter sent to the Bank of England had cast upon them. The bankers, as was justly said by Mr. Burke in one of his papers, were in a great degree the supporters of the prosperity of the country. It was not fair, then, to hold them up, at such a crisis as the present, as the authors or abettors of the evils which had come upon the country from an absurd and mischievous system of speculation.—With respect to the question of the alteration in the currency, on which so much had been said, he did not think it was a matter which should be necessarily mixed up with the present question. He would rather have it made the subject of a separate discussion—or that it should be referred to a committee, in the old constitutional way—instead of being thus incidentally, and he must say imperfectly, brought forward. One thing which he would wish to impress on ministers, was, that supposing government determined to pursue the present plan, he hoped it would be suspended for a short time, in order to ascertain the real condition of the country; though, as to the real object which was intended, he would rather incur at once all the evils of an abolition of the small notes, than keep the country in a state of suspense as to what was intended; for, in his judgment, the principle of the measure was substantially and radically sound. There was one part of the subject, on which he had some little doubt; and he lamented that he had been compelled, by severe indisposition, to leave the House on Friday night before the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade had concluded his speech; and he regretted it the more, as he had not been able to make out what he had said. The point to which he alluded, was the opinion which some gentlemen had put forth so confidently, as to the expediency of having a gold currency merely. This was an opinion which he could not at all understand; for all other nations were satisfied with a mixed currency of gold and silver. It would be no difficult matter at present; at least it would, in a short time, be easily obtained in considerable quantities. As he was on this subject, he would state, that he had noticed that country bankers were not fond of issues of silver, not because they preferred the circulation of their own notes, but because they were much annoyed by the extensive circulation of counterfeit coin; and this evil was, in a great measure, caused by the imperfect state of our criminal code on the subject. Of this he would state an instance. Some time ago persons were going about with an immense quantity of counterfeit coin. It was carried about in a cart with a false bottom, and disposed of at fairs and markets, to the great injury of thousands of the poor, on whom the loss in such cases generally fell most severely. They were at length detected, and about 2,500 pieces of counterfeit coin were found in their possession. They were tried and found guilty, and sentenced to only twelve months' imprisonment. This kind of punishment, for a crime involving such serious evils, was wholly inadequate; and, unless the law in this respect was altered, it could not be expected that this evil would cease, if silver should be a part of our currency as well as gold. He might add, that the very beautiful coin of crown pieces, which was some time ago in circulation, had not been counterfeited in any one instance that he had ever heard of. The reason was, that this coin had an inscription round the edge, which it

was extremely difficult to imitate; but the fact was, that no such imitation had ever been attempted that he had heard of. He mentioned this with a view of encouraging an attempt to introduce that coin again into circulation; and, at the same time, he would suggest the propriety of extending the legal tender of silver from 40*s*. to 5*l*., which would have the effect of making a considerable circulation of silver in the country. That this was wanted in many parts of the country, was well known. It was within his own knowledge, that within the last fortnight silver was so scarce in a manufacturing town, that a great many of the workmen were paid by orders on publicans and others who supplied articles of food and drink—a mode of paying the wages of labour, the injurious tendency of which it was unnecessary for him to point out.—He would now trouble the House with a few words on the state in which the country was at the present moment, in order to impress on hon. members the necessity of coming, with as little delay as possible, to some decisive resolution on the subject. The House were aware, that a very considerable degree of alarm existed in the public mind, since the meeting of parliament, on the subject of our commercial and mercantile embarrassments. That a very great degree of alarm and panic had existed before the parliament met, would not be denied; and, perhaps, it would have been more prudent in ministers to have made some inquiries as to the actual state of the country, before they put forth the statement contained in the letter sent to the Bank on the 13th of January. At the date of that letter, however, the public mind was comparatively tranquil—not that all cause of distrust and alarm had subsided, for there still existed considerable grounds for both. Not so, however, was it on the 2nd of February, the day on which the House met. There was then a renewal of the panic which had partially subsided, and he was sorry to say, that the alarm had continued to increase daily. Such being the present state of the country, he thought it was most important that the House should not delay bringing the question before them to an issue. The state of doubt and anxiety in which the public mind was placed, with respect to it, was almost incredible. Various reports were going forth as to what was passing, and what was intended. He had heard that day, that it was reported and believed in several parts of the country, that the one-pound notes were to be altogether suppressed; and there were a variety of other rumours calculated to add to the degree of alarm already existing. These doubts and surmises, he hoped, would be put an end to by the decision of that night. He would rather witness the suppression of the small notes altogether, with all the inconveniences of such a step, than the continuance of the present state of doubt and suspense. In conclusion, he would repeat the expression of a hope, that ministers would go on with confidence, and endeavour to meet the evil by the best remedy in their power; and in every such practicable attempt, he was sure that no obstacles would be thrown in their way from the opposition side of the House.

Mr. *C. Grant* said, he entirely concurred with his hon. friend as to the importance of the resolution before the House, and the necessity of there being as little delay as possible in coming to a decision upon it. At the same time, he could not but feel somewhat surprised at the inconsistency of his hon. friend, in advising, in one part of his speech, that the measure should be suspended for a time, and in another, that the House should not adjourn without coming to a decision upon it. It was equally inconsistent in the hon. member to censure government for not having delayed some time longer, before they proposed the very remedy to which he now attached such importance, and now to call upon them to come boldly forward and carry that remedy into operation. He would admit, that ministers might be blamed for not delaying to propose any remedy, if by such delay it could be hoped the evil would correct itself; but, if that could not be expected, then it was their duty to come forward and show that they were alive to the subject, to frame their measure so as, if it could not cure the disorder, it would prevent its extension, and guard against its recurrence. It was impossible to avoid doing something on the subject, even though they might not succeed in affording an immediate remedy. He was glad to perceive that there were no objections to the merits of the proposed plan. The chief that he had heard were as to the time. One hon. member had said, that at such a crisis as the present it ought not to be introduced; another had

objected to its not having been introduced before; and a third had feared that it would have the effect of an inconvenient diminution of the circulating medium. He did not concur in these opinions. He thought the time was proper; and, under the circumstances in which the country was placed, that ministers would be shrinking from their duty, if they did not grapple with the difficulties of the case as well as they were able. Sensibility for the distress which existed they all felt; but true sensibility, while it felt the evil, endeavoured, at the same time, to devise some means by which it might be averted. It was on this ground that he was anxious for the progress of the measure. They all acknowledged that great distress had existed; but it could not be denied that its situation was becoming better every day; and he did hope that, in a short time, public confidence would be altogether restored. But it was always found, that in recovering from a state of great and sudden depression, the country rose with even greater rapidity than it had descended. In this unhealthy action of the system, the paroxysm was as sudden and as violent by which we emerged from, as that by which we had fallen into, a state of commercial distress. What would be the consequence of the sudden change? The spirit of speculation would again take possession of men's minds, over-trading would follow, and depression would once more be the result. Now, he would ask, was it not the duty of the legislature to guard against such frequent and sudden revulsions in our system—to prevent the over-trading of one period, from being the consequence of too sudden an ebb of our commerce in the succeeding? And, what more effectual course could be adopted than by removing at once the temptation to such over-trading, by taking away the unsound basis on which it was made to rest? The hon. member for London had complained, that this measure would not meet the evil, and he had objected to it on that ground. This was because the hon. member had not looked to what was the real object proposed. It was never expected that the plan now before the House would of itself be a relief to the immediate distresses of the country. Let the House see what was proposed to be effected by the resolution before them. It never was intended as a plan capable of meeting all the exigencies of our situation. Neither was it expected, that it should embrace every improvement of which the state of our currency was susceptible. Let the House judge of it then, only by what it did propose to effect, and not by applying it to matters to which it was not intended to have, and really could not have, any direct application. With respect to the currency he would observe, that the suggestions thrown out by the hon. member for Taunton, were well worthy of examination. The subject had, for some time, been under the consideration of his right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade. Undoubtedly it did, on the face of it, appear rather a circuitous way of obtaining silver to obtain gold first; but that was a matter which should be left for discussion to a more fit occasion, and would be introduced by his right hon. friend in its proper time. He only adverted to it now, for the purpose of saying, that it was a point which was not intended to be embraced by the resolution before the House. Neither was it hoped that this resolution would effectually guard the country against those fluctuations, in both species of currency, to which the country might, from a variety of causes, be liable in the best of times. These were matters which could not be foreseen, or prevented, by any human prudence; and when they did occur, must be left to remedies which would be suggested by the circumstances under which they rose—The measure before them did not profess to deal with every evil which might arise in any state of the currency. Its object was simply this—to prevent the ruinous effects of a system of over-trading, to which temptations would be held out under particular states of our currency, if left unchecked. It was said by some hon. member, that there was a tendency in every species of paper currency to displace gold, unless its progress should be arrested by some check; and the great problem of the country at that moment was to provide some such check, which would operate by way of prevention rather than cure. One hon. member seemed to think that the convertability of paper into gold on demand, would afford this desirable check. In that opinion the hon. member concurred with those of many eminent men, and with that which was so ably stated in the report of the Bullion Committee. He (Mr. C. Grant) agreed as to the convert-

ability of paper to gold. This, perhaps, was the general opinion at that time; but it must be admitted, that the science of political economy was still almost in its infancy: and that further investigations were daily throwing new light on the subject; and that we were as yet in a state of experiment with respect to it, as compared with what we might be in the course of time. There were some who thought that there was a kind of preventive check to the displacing of gold, by which the approach of the evil might be known; and the rate of exchange, as regulated by our issues of paper, was said to be of that description; but this would operate so tardily as to admit of the evil going to a great extent before it operated as a remedy. Besides, the opinions of those by whose will paper issues were regulated might differ as to the effect of those issues on the rate of exchange; or they might think that they had a sufficient quantity of gold in their coffers to allow them to continue those issues longer. He could easily conceive, how, under such circumstances, the rate of exchange against us might be allowed to proceed to a very injurious extent, before the remedy was called into effective operation. Some hon. gentlemen had the other evening given it as their opinion, that the present state of things had been brought about by over-issues: others had attributed it to over-trading. For his part, he conceived that both these causes had operated simultaneously in producing them, and that, in fact over-trading had created over-issues; and, in turn, over-issues had created over-trading. It had been argued, that the immediate convertability of paper into gold would be of itself sufficient to keep the currency of the country in a healthy state; but this, by experience, had been found to be far from being the case; indeed, the mere power of this convertability alone operated too tardily, to give a sufficient check to the recurrence of evils like those under which the country was at present suffering. This power of convertability might, indeed, serve in part to remedy the disaster after it had occurred; but as a preventive, it would have but a very weak effect; and surely it was better to adopt such measures as would be most likely to keep off the calamity altogether, than such merely as might in part relieve us from it after it had fallen upon us. When it was considered amongst what class of individuals the circulation of one and two pound notes chiefly prevailed, it must at once strike every one what a dreadful state of suffering and misery must inevitably be produced by the failure of the issuers of them. Amongst the higher classes of society, such an occurrence might, and indeed frequently did, reduce individuals from a state of affluence to a mere competency; but, amongst the poor and labouring classes of the community, who were the principal holders of these small notes, its effects were to reduce them from poverty to absolute beggary and starvation: besides, whenever a panic did take place, the poor man was the first to take the alarm, and by his apprehensions contributed to spread the dismay, which had a very great tendency to bring about the evil he apprehended. The more wealthy had better means of satisfying themselves as to the stability of their bankers; and it rarely occurred, that with this class the panic originated.—Another of the causes was, that the quantity of gold in circulation was gradually reduced to a point far below that which was adequate to the emergencies of the country. Now, if you can meet these two circumstances—if you can extricate from panic the great bulk of the consumers, and secure a fund of gold in the kingdom, sufficient to maintain public confidence—if you can devise a measure that will reach these two points, great progress would be made towards diminishing the frequency of the recurrence of the existing distress; and when it did recur, of abating its violence. If he were not mistaken, the proposed measure, if carried into effect would introduce into our system of currency this corrective and renovating principle—it would remove the apprehensions of that class of the people who were most liable to danger, and would create and maintain a fund of gold in the country, so palpable, that even should a panic seize the lower classes, the better-informed ranks of the community would know there was sufficient gold in the kingdom to meet all exigencies, and would thus prevent those alternations which, when they occurred, almost disposed men to fling away all principles of currency whatsoever. This was his view of the measure before the House. He believed it had been urged against the adoption of the present measure, that it would be an arbitrary interference by the legislature with what they had no right to interfere with at all; but,

if this was a question that could be decided by the weight of authorities, great names might be adduced in favour of the adoption of the plan propounded. He was aware that a distinguished individual, now no more, the late Mr. Ricardo, was opposed to the principle; but if that eminent writer had witnessed what had occurred, there was great reason to believe he would have changed his opinions. Adam Smith approved of the restrictions now proposed, and suggested the plan, which, he trusted, was about to be carried into execution. His principle was, that between the issuer and consumer, the medium should be gold — between dealer and dealer, paper. Mr. Horner, in his early publications, had declared opinions hostile to this restriction; but in the course of the examination before the bullion committee, he found reason to change those opinions. The same views had been supported by the high authority of Mr. Tooke, and amongst the highest names he would place his right hon. friend the president of the Board of Trade, whose presence restrained him from expressing all he felt to be due to his judgment. Besides, this principle had already been recognized and acted upon by the legislature; for at one time ten shilling, indeed five shilling notes, were in circulation in Scotland; but these had been put a stop to by act of parliament. Should there then be any insuperable objection on the ground of arbitrary interference on the part of the legislature in the present case, such objection ought to have had equal weight when the act for suppressing these ten and five shilling notes was proposed. The United States bank, which had had considerable experience in these matters, had been obliged to have recourse to a similar measure of restriction. The right hon. member said, however, that he did not wish to justify this measure as being no departure from principle (although in his opinion, it might be easily justified on that ground); for the securing of such great benefits, and the averting of such dreadful calamities as this measure was calculated to effect, formed an ample justification to the legislature for interfering some little with natural liberty. In every wise system of currency it was a primary element, that paper should be convertible at pleasure into a metallic currency, and that all small payments and the great bulk of the circulation, should be in gold. It had been urged in opposition to this measure, that it would have the effect of reducing prices to too low an ebb, and that, in the present artificial state of the country, and burdened as we were with debt and taxes, it would render our finances insufficient to meet our exigencies. For his part, he anticipated no such calamitous consequences We had only to place our currency on a firm and solid basis; we should thereby speedily restore confidence, and the industry, wealth, and resources of the country would instantly be called forth, and would shortly disperse the cloud which at present hung over us; whereas should we continue to go on upon the old system, the alarm would increase, and, increasing would necessarily bring fresh misery along with it. Public credit, instead of recovering, would sustain a fresh shock, and there was no knowing where the evil might ultimately end. For these reasons, he should give his hearty support to the resolution proposed by his right hon. friend.

Sir *John Newport* wished, that the hon. members who were adverse to the measures introduced by the chancellor of the Exchequer, with a view to prevent the issue of small notes, to consider dispassionately, all the evils which it produced. An over issue of them entailed upon every class of the community, evils, which not only affected the class who might be most prepared to meet them, but even the lowest class—those who should be the peculiar object of their care. They should consider how they would be circumstanced, if they were left with a currency, which was, at all times, liable to the panic lately witnessed in this country, and to be operated on by every rumour which malignant individuals might be disposed to propagate. As affecting the country to which he belonged, no country ever suffered so much. He spoke feelingly on the subject, having been himself concerned with many of his most intimate connexions in banking there; and from the knowledge he had acquired of the system, he considered the issue of small notes, not only destructive to the person who received them in payment, but injurious, eventually, to the bankers who issued them. It might be said, that no evil could arise, where notes of this description were issued by solvent bankers. He would show how soon the most solvent bankers might be drawn into the miseries incidental to an over issue. A solvent banker, for instance, acting prudently for a series of years, finds, started up in opposition to him, a

bank with little or no capital. It of necessity pushes out all the paper it can at first: the banker wonders how long the public can support men, who should not be considered trust-worthy. But by-and-by, he experiences a cessation of his own business, and, whilst one from design issues paper, the other, really solvent, is, from necessity, obliged to furnish capital, almost to every needy adventurer who applies for it. The paper once out, the solvent and the insolvent are alike liable to all the agitation and alarm which a sudden run brings with it, when that alarm, in many cases, is produced without any foundation. It was said, that the commerce of the country, or a portion of it, could not be carried on without such a currency. If it were so, he felt the evils to be of such a grievous nature, that if it was put to him as an alternative, whether such a currency should be continued, or a portion of the commerce abandoned, he would say, let the commerce be abandoned. He believed that such an opinion was most fallacious, and that the commerce of this or any other country could be carried on without those artificial means. It had been said, that this was not the time for such a change, and an hon. friend near him, had even expressed a wish that there might be a delay for some weeks, to give time for a better consideration of the subject. Now, that was, of all things, what he most deprecated. It was painful for him to differ from that hon. friend, but he must say, that nothing was likely to be so injurious as any postponement of the decision to which he hoped the House would come with the slightest possible delay. All parties were prepared—their minds were now made up—that was the very time to bring the question to issue, and at once put to rest all the doubt and indecision, which had agitated all the transactions of society. He knew well the danger of this state of things, to that part of the kingdom with which he was more immediately connected, and he therefore most earnestly wished it to be put an end to. Since the time that the small banks failed in that country, there were no small notes, except those of the Bank of Ireland. This system, he repeated, ought to be put down; and, as far as his native country was concerned, the present was the best and safest time. He did not, of course, mean that it should be put down hastily and abruptly, but at a fixed period. Could any time be chosen more fit than the present, when all the country bankers had drawn in their notes, in consequence of the alarm that prevailed? Once more allow every petty provincial banking establishment to deluge its districts with one-pound notes, and we should have the same ground to go over again—the same distress—the same panic—before we could effectually put down that issue, which must eventually prove the destruction of the country. He begged pardon for having troubled the House, but he felt called upon, from the situation in which he happened to be placed, to state his opinions upon the subject; and he could only add, that the luminous, and statesmanlike speech of the right hon. gentleman who preceded him, had left him nothing to add upon that side of the question, which he felt it to be his duty to espouse.

Mr. Alderman *Heygate* said, that the present question was not whether this was a prudent or an imprudent measure, but whether this was the proper time for interfering with the most delicate of all things—the currency of the country. Nothing had caused more astonishment in his mind, than the first sentence in the letter recently sent by the first lord of the Treasury, to the Bank, in which he found it boldly stated, that the panic was over, and that the pecuniary affairs of the country were once more flowing from their wholesome accustomed sources, and running through their wonted channels. For his own part, he was convinced that the panic had been increasing ever since parliament met, and that in consequence of the long continuance of this panic, the currency of the country had been reduced to so low an ebb, as to be scarcely sufficient for the carrying on of the commercial transactions of the country. The paper issues were now as much contracted as the most ardent admirer of the bullion system could wish: gold was flowing into the country as fast as possible; and it would necessarily continue to do so, for the country was full of merchandize of all sorts, which had been paid for, and which, when exported, must unavoidably in a short time bring back gold. But, at the present moment, the currency of the country was not sufficient, and in consequence of such insufficiency, there was a stagnation in all kinds of business. Ought the currency, then, at this critical period, to be still further diminished? Was it wise in the government, when such was the state of the pecuniary affairs

of the country, to issue a manifesto to the Bank of England, reflecting on all the country bankers in the kingdom, and threatening to compel them to withdraw their one and two pound notes from circulation, in direct violation of the understanding in 1823? He was no advocate for the country bankers, or for the system of banking which had prevailed for the last fifty years, to the disgrace of the country. There could be no doubt that a metallic was much preferable to a paper currency, and yet this latter currency had been strongly recommended by Mr. Pitt, in 1797; but he must say, that much obloquy had been cast on country bankers, when they were not the parties who deserved it. This class of individuals had never generally objected to the plan of giving deposits as a security for their notes. The dislike to this measure amongst the more numerous and respectable portion of them arose solely from the clumsy mode in which it was proposed to carry it into execution. If it had been proposed in a practicable manner, there would have been no difficulty in effecting it: for if some few of the bankers had been offended with it, and thrown up their business, others would have been readily found, to have supplied their place.—The hon. member proceeded to observe, that this question had been treated on far too narrow grounds. It had been discussed as if it merely related to the profits of the bankers; whereas it concerned the whole nation. It should have been well considered, whether the country could at present afford to provide eight or ten millions of bullion to supply the paper currency, which had been and would be withdrawn from circulation to that amount. He believed several theorists, who had written books on this subject, had stated, that it might be done, and that it would be a beneficial measure; but scarcely any of those theorists or book-writers agreed with one another, or even for two years with themselves. Mr. Tooke differed from Mr. Ricardo, and from Mr. M'Culloch, who had come down from heaven to illuminate us on the subject of political economy; but, in truth, there was no reliance to be placed on these theorists; all their schemes were visionary or impracticable. Should this resolution be passed—and he had no doubt it would be —the blessed effects of it would soon begin to discover themselves; but it would ill become hon. gentlemen, who were now receiving the speeches of ministers with cheers, hereafter to complain of them. If this resolution should pass, every country banker must instantly begin to call in his outstanding notes, and to prepare himself for the state of things which was to take place at the expiration of the three years. What had been the conduct of ministers on this occasion? Notwithstanding parliament was sitting, they had issued an order to suspend the issue of any more one or two pound note stamps; thereby disregarding the licence of the bankers, breaking the law, and violating the principles of the constitution. When Mr. Pitt took upon himself to act without the authority of parliament, there was some urgent necessity, such as a threatened invasion, for his so doing, neither was parliament sitting; but, as soon as it was assembled, he came down to the House, and explained the circumstances which compelled him to adopt the summary measure he had had recourse to, and to pray for an indemnity. But, what was the urgent necessity for this extraordinary proceeding on the part of the ministers on the present occasion? Why, forsooth, it was to prevent the direful consequences which would have ensued from a few bankers issuing a few one or two pound notes! To avoid this dreadful disaster, individuals had been deprived of their legal rights, and the constitution of the country had been grossly violated. He should wish any practical man to be asked, what were likely to be the effects of this resolution. It was evident that it must compel the immediate withdrawing from circulation of all the country bankers' notes.—He would now proceed to another branch of the right hon. gentleman's scheme; he meant the establishing of joint-stock banks. If the right hon. gentleman had forty or fifty joint-stock banks ready to come into immediate operation, so as at once to fill up the void which would be created by the destruction of all the country bankers, he should not feel such decisive objections to the measure; for, although it might bear very hard upon, and be most unjust to an unoffending class of individuals, the country bankers, still it would not be injurious to the public at large; as it would make little difference to them, whether they got their exigencies supplied from an individual or a joint-stock bank. But, it must be recollected, that a considerable interval must necessarily

elapse before these joint banks could commence their operations; and what was to be done in the mean time? During this interval, the misery and embarrassment of the country must inevitably be increased to ten times the extent that they prevailed at present. The worthy alderman here proceeded to draw a lamentable picture of the times, and read to the House a letter which he had that morning received from a person of undoubted integrity, residing in a village in Lancashire where no one or two pound notes were in circulation, and which was to the following effect:—"This part of the country is in a state really dreadful; robberies are innumerable; the people are half starved; failures almost universal; the distress of the poor is not to be conceived; thirty families have been thrown on the parish in one week, and during the last six weeks things have been getting worse and worse." He did not make these statements for the purpose of annoying ministers. He would at any time rather support than oppose them: he had supported them when it was not popular to support them, and when a vote was worth something [a laugh]—he did not mean that he had got any money by it; he did not want it. He opposed the ministry on the present occasion, because he felt convinced that their scheme was replete with bad consequences. It would compel the country bankers, who had made advances to their prudent and industrious neighbours, immediately to call them in. This would not be done harshly on the part of the bankers, but it was impossible that a country banker could, in the present state of the country, call in 100*l.* without throwing three or four persons out of employ; for as no sales of goods could be effected at present, the manufacturer must withdraw the money to pay the advance from the capital which he would otherwise have laid out in his trade.—There was another great objection to the establishing of the joint-stock banks. A rivalry would immediately commence between them, and they would deluge the country with their paper. The measure would also have the effect of causing all the respectable country bankers to give up their business; and those only would remain to whom the winding-up of their accounts would be formidable, and who felt conscious that their circumstances were such, that they would lose their consequence by ceasing to be bankers. But, at any rate, if this joint-stock plan was to be adopted, it would be but fair that the present country banks should have due notice, and a proper period allowed them, before these companies should be permitted to commence their operations. He conceived that the country banks deserved protection. For he was of opinion, that there were other parties to whom the recent convulsion in the commercial world ought to be attributed. It was, however, not impolitic in the government, when it had once got into a scrape, to attribute that misfortune to those who, from their situation, were incapacitated from saying much for themselves. He was well aware that there were but few people who entertained the sentiments which he did on this question; and that was the very reason why he was anxious to state them to the House. What, he would ask, were the chief causes of the distress which now prevailed? He had no hesitation in saying, that one of the causes of the late panic was produced by the operation of the act which was passed in 1819, for the resumption of cash payments, and which was generally known by the name of Mr. Peel's Bill. It was the fashion at the time to praise that bill; and he well recollected that it was predicated of it, that it had settled the question of currency for ever. Now, it was his opinion at the moment—and he had acted upon that opinion by forming one of the minority who had divided against it—that it was one of the most hasty measures that had ever been passed by any grave deliberative assembly. It was ushered into the House by a speech, to which he had listened with delight and attention—for refinement and eloquence always commanded them—but which dealt in many topics which had no connexion with the subject matter in debate, and utterly neglected those which bore upon it. They were told, that they were then returning to a reformation of the coinage, equal to that which had been effected in the reign of queen Elizabeth. But, though such was the language then held out to them, not one word was said about the 800,000,000*l.* of debt, under which the country now laboured; not one word about its immense load of taxation, its exchequer-bills, its navy-bills, its treasury-bills, and its various other bills, all of which were unknown to queen Elizabeth. These omissions would have been of little consequence, had it not happened that these slight differences in the relative

situation of the country in the present time, and in the time of queen Elizabeth, had altered the appearance of the whole question.—It was said, that other nations, and especially France, had a currency of gold and silver; and it was thereupon asked, why this country should not have a similar currency too? The reason was evident. We had expended our means. In 1793, we had engaged in a war, which was called just and necessary, but which he was not certain that he should have supported had he been in parliament; and we had subsidized, during its continuance, every power in Europe, to fight our battles against the French republic. We had sent our gold out of the country day after day, notwithstanding the warnings which the Bank had given to Mr. Pitt, of the evil which it must eventually occasion. Mr. Pitt had said, that it was no matter, as it was absolutely necessary to save the country from the dangers which environed it. In the meanwhile, what was the conduct of France? Her governors were making her friends at one time, and her foes at another, defray the amount of her war expenditure. Her armies were plundering, in turn, every country which they visited, and were bringing back gold to it in enormous quantities. If the plan which Mr. Ricardo had proposed had been adopted, it might, perhaps, have been practicable to have resumed cash payments after the lapse of some time; but, to resume it immediately, and to persist in the resumption of it, was as impracticable as to expect a man who had reduced his income from 5,000*l.* to 500*l.* a year, to continue long that rate of expenditure. The bill of 1819 professed to bring us back to the standard of our ancestors. But, in his opinion, it did no such thing. On the contrary, it raised that standard considerably. Indeed, no man could doubt it, who saw the manner in which our gold coin was now exported to the continent, on account of its extreme fineness and beauty. The precaution which the hon. member for Taunton had suggested the other night, and which was then so much lauded, of guarding against the fluctuations of the currency by adopting a double standard, was then generally scouted and ridiculed. In short, every precaution which could have secured the Bank and the public was neglected as superfluous; and it was thought that the House had only to pass certain high-sounding resolutions, in the name of the Commons of England, to bring back the currency to a sound condition. The bill founded upon them, it was asserted, would place the country in eternal peace and prosperity; and certainly that eternal peace and prosperity did continue till last year. But then an alteration took place in the prospect of affairs; and, what was it that produced it? Not the issue of country-bank notes; for the difference in the amount of them was but trifling, and even that difference, such as it was, was ascertained from the most fallacious of all criterions—the number of stamps issued. It was impossible, in the first place, to know how long the notes of bankers circulated; and then, nothing varied so much as the number of stamps issued by them at different periods. At one time a great, and at another time a small number were stamped. In seasons of adversity, when the circulation was diminished, a banker had not occasion for new stamps; but, in seasons of prosperity, when his notes were in demand, he was obliged to use a multitude of fresh stamps. But, suppose that the country bankers did increase their circulation to the amount stated by the right hon. gentleman, they had an excuse for what they did, because they did not know that they were doing wrong. The Bank of England had likewise increased its issues, and, as he thought, unwisely and improperly; for the quantity of paper in circulation had certainly an effect on the exchanges; though not to the extent which the bullionists contended. The Bank of England, he said, had increased its issues, and the extent of that increase might have been ascertained by the returns which it was obliged to make periodically to that House. But, the increased issues of the country bankers could not be ascertained, either by the public or by each other; so that an individual, in issuing notes to supply the circulation of his own immediate district, might not be aware that by adding to the notes issued by other individuals in a similar situation, he was causing a glut of paper, which it was now said aggravated the misery of the country.—But, with regard to the increased issues of the Bank, he had one remark, which he conceived important, to make. Government had seen them, and had not remonstrated against them; at least he inferred so from the fact of their having made considerable use of them. They sold to the Bank the "dead weight" as it was called, and by so doing gave the Bank an opportunity of

sending forth an additional issue of its notes. Why had the government resorted to that scheme? Because a cry had been raised throughout the country against the weight of taxation; and they saw no other way of getting rid of it. It was his opinion, that the public at large had received considerable benefit from that issue. It had led to a reduction of some of the assessed taxes, and also to converting the five per cent stock into four per cent stock, and the four per cent stock into 3½ per cent stock. He believed there was some sense in this argument.—The House would further observe, that the government had entertained some fear that it would not be able to pay the dissentients to their plan of reducing the different stock, and had therefore asked the Bank, whether it would pay them for it. The Bank agreed to do so; and he believed had done so to the amount of six millions, which occasioned another extensive issue. The House would likewise observe, that the government reduced the interest on Exchequer-bills to 2¼ per cent—a circumstance which, combined with the issues of the Bank, had driven all the gold out of the country. All persons who held these bills during the war, when they found that they could no longer receive the high rate of interest which they had formerly received upon them, engaged in foreign loans, and risked their capital in the various wild projects which rose up, one after the other, with unexampled rapidity. If he were asked to lay his hand on his heart and to say, what he believed to have been most instrumental in producing the late rise in prices, and the numerous schemes which had been foisted on the credulity of the public, he should answer, the reduction of interest on Exchequer-bills; and he now said, that the wisest thing for the government to do was to pay on the unfunded part of their debt a rational interest. He should, perhaps, be told, that by that reduction of interest a saving of 200,000*l.* or 300,000*l.* had been effected to the country; but, allowing that to be the case, he did not conceive it to be of sufficient advantage to counterbalance the evils which it had created. He recollected, that at the time when all these reductions were effecting, the right hon. gentleman opposite was holding out to the country, that the prosperity of which he boasted so much was founded on a solid and substantial basis. That declaration, coming from so high a quarter, had excited a confidence which would not otherwise have existed among the dealers in shares of the several joint-stock companies. The repeal of the bubble act increased that confidence; as did the vote which two or three of the ministers gave in favour of some of the new companies; especially of that which went to erect new docks where no dock at all was wanted. He thought the conduct of ministers in voting for such measures very reprehensible; and the remarks which so humble an individual as himself had made upon the subject, had had the effect of inducing the hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs to leave the House without voting. That confidence was still further augmented by the circumstance of the right hon. the President of the Board of Trade having become president of a company for the breeding of silk-worms—very innocently he had no doubt, and without any interested motives—and by the daily annunciation in the newspapers, that several of the ministers patronized other schemes for the improvement of the national resources. Conduct like this could not fail to produce an effect upon the country; and he therefore thought that when they were discussing the cause of difficulties like the present, and were laying all the blame of them on the country bankers, they ought to reserve a little share of it for those who had not turned the mind of the public in the proper direction, when they were enabled to do so, by their talents, their eloquence, and their information. After pursuing these topics at considerable length, and remarking, that two schemes had been proposed either as a remedy for the present, or a preventive of future distress; namely, the substitution of a gold in lieu of a paper currency, or the compelling bankers to deposit security for the notes they issued—the worthy alderman proceeded to ask, whether the present was the time for carrying either scheme into effect? He thought it was not. The country was not in a situation at present to bear the operation which would restore it to health and prosperity. Before either measure was attempted to be carried into execution, the government must restore the confidence and revive the credit of the country. There was no occasion for hurry. Delay would do good, and precipitation would certainly occasion mischief. If the House would let it go forth to the country, that it was not at present prepared to destroy

every thing relating to country banks; that it was willing to suspend its plans; that it would appoint a committee to examine, and would allow things to get cool again before it proceeded to legislate, it would do all that could be expected from it in the present emergency; and yet, even a determination so to act would be adopted too late. They might pass what resolutions they pleased that night—they might carry it with as high a hand as they pleased—they would nevertheless soon be compelled to retrace their steps; as such a convulsion would result from them as they were not prepared for. All men of sense and information viewed the situation in which the country was placed with apprehension and alarm. They were placed in circumstances in which talent and refined wit and eloquence were not only not calculated to do good, but were even likely to produce harm. They were discussing a dry matter of business, which affected the comforts and well-being of every man in the nation. Gentlemen ought, therefore, to consider that they had a serious duty to perform. It might be true that government had warned the country of their folly in embarking in these speculations; but it was not less true, that it was the duty of the government to protect its subjects from their errors when they had once got into them. Let them abandon theory, and look to practical experience. If they did not, this old country with all its artificial relations of society, would be torn entirely to pieces. Let them pursue their principles of free trade but a little further, and they would drive every bit of gold out of the country. Free trade between countries where there was a reciprocity of interest to support it, might exist with benefit to both parties; but, free trade between countries which had nothing in common, of which one was sinking under a weight of taxation, and the other was almost untouched by it, could not exist without enriching the latter country at the total ruin of the former. If government would carry the principles of free trade into practice, it ought to commence by establishing a free trade in corn. It knew, however, that it could not establish such a trade; neither was he sure that such a trade ought to be established. In saying this, he knew that he was going against all the doctrines in favour of cheap bread, which were so popular, at the eve of a general election; but it was impossible to deny that if they had bread at a cheap rate, the poor lands must be thrown out of cultivation; and if they were thrown out of cultivation the agricultural population would be thrown out of employment; and if they were thrown out of employment, where were the manufacturers to find a vent for their different manufactures? He knew that the political economists saw no evil in such a state of things: they had no objection to turn the agricultural labourers into mechanics, and the 'squires and the clergy into drapers and tailors, if profit were the result of the conversion. Profit was the perpetual burden of their song. If profit could be ultimately obtained, they overlooked the misery which was created in the interim. So long as they had profit before them, it mattered not whether all the aristocracy, clergy, and gentry of the country were turned topsy-turvy, and all the relations of society destroyed in one general convulsion. The country had grown great by the wise and cautious measures of our forefathers. He trusted that it would adhere to the plan upon which they had achieved its past and present greatness. If it did so, it would go on prospering and to prosper; and if it did not, it would sink, he was afraid, day after day, into deeper ruin. He implored the right hon. the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to employ his great talent and extensive information in the investigation of this subject, to trust to his own goodness of heart, which he knew to be most excellent; to give fair play to his own admirable understanding, and to look at practice rather than at theory. If he did so, future generations would hail him as the benefactor of his country: if not, he would plunge it into a sea of troubles, out of which he might endeavour, but in vain, to extricate it.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that in immediately following the hon. gentleman who had just sat down, he would endeavour to take advantage of his precept, by confining himself as much as possible to the subject under the consideration of the House. He could not, however, forbear expressing some surprise that the gentleman who had uttered that precept had himself so far departed from it as to introduce to the notice of the House a bill which he had formerly brought under its consideration; and that the hon. gentleman in adverting to that bill, had dwelt rather upon the speech which introduced

it, than upon the measure itself. He had spoken, however, in such flattering terms of that speech, that he could easily forgive the hon. member for having noticed it, irrelevant even as it was. He would not only obey the precept, but he would improve upon the practice of his great preceptor, by not saying one word of queen Elizabeth, or upon any other of the variety of topics to which the hon. gentleman had adverted, and which seemed to give him so much pain. The hon. gentleman had chosen a wide field for discussion; but over that extensive field it was not his intention to follow him. Some part of his representations as to the distress of the country, and its commercial embarrassments, he regretted he was obliged to admit. The continuance of them, in a considerable degree, he admitted also; and further he regretted, that he could not accurately see the end of them. He might also commence his address, by expressing his entire conviction, that if the House would give effect to the measure of his right hon. friend, they would discover, that those causes, which had been alleged by some as the operating causes of the present distress, were not in fact those to which that distress was properly attributable. He might further declare his entire conviction of the absolute necessity, on the part of the House, of turning their attention to the state of the currency of the country; and, notwithstanding what had already been observed on that subject, notwithstanding the doubts and predictions of some hon. gentlemen—he should not be deterred from exhorting the House, immediately to turn its attention towards the subject of the currency. He would ask, with the utmost confidence, whether it was possible for any man, who looked at the facts and arguments already produced in the course of this discussion, to hesitate for a moment upon the question, whether he would permit the currency to remain in its present state. For a period now of nearly thirty years had that currency stood upon an insecure and a defective basis; and, with every disposition to protect the interests of the country bankers, he must claim the right of examining with perfect freedom the different bearings of this important question. In doing so, he could not but express his astonishment at the feelings entertained by some gentlemen with regard to the expressions of his right hon. friend near him, and of his noble friend in another place. Those expressions were not, as was seemed to be supposed, directed against the individuals concerned in country banking, but against the system itself—a system which was alone responsible for the evils that flowed from it, and which, therefore, justly deserved the language which had been applied to it. If his right hon. and noble friends, instead of saying generally, that the spirit of speculation was fostered and encouraged by the system of country banks, and the conduct of country bankers, had said, in so many words, that he hated them as scandalous, that he execrated them as abominable, then it must be admitted that the phrases employed were hardly justifiable. The whole course of one hon. gentleman's speech seemed to have been directed to raise the imputation that the government had been industriously employing itself to blacken the character of the country bankers. Now, he must beg leave to disclaim that imputation in the most distinct manner. He, for one, entertained the sincerest respect for many of the gentlemen engaged in banking business in the country; he firmly believed there was as large a portion of honourable men in that class, as in any other; but, when he said so, he still claimed the privilege of a member of parliament to speak of them and of their conduct, in the same free manner as he would speak of the conduct of any other men exercising public functions, or filling private stations, whose duties and responsibilities almost amounted to public functions. What, he would ask, were country banks? At present there were eight hundred of these establishments in the country, issuing notes, which formed a considerable portion of its circulating medium. In Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, when speaking of the distresses in the year 1793, and considering the nature and the effect of country banks, he stated, that it was uncertain to what their exact number amounted, but he computed them at 288. Since that time, that number had greatly increased; and at the present moment they amounted to no less than 800, issuing, as he had said before, notes that formed the circulating medium of the country, and in which the active labour and industry of the country was paid. Respecting these banks, the hon. member had stated a fact, in which he found a strong presumption, that the present system of country banks was imperfect. That hon. member had

declared, that the issues of country bankers could hardly be estimated or foreseen; since one country banker might make an over-issue, as he could not know to what extent the issue was made by another. That fact seemed to have been stated by the hon. member as a vindication of the country banks. But that vindication was in truth not their blame, but the blame of the system, and of the system alone. The hon. member for Staffordshire had said, in the beginning of the debate, that the increase of the issue of bank notes was not to be imputed as a fault to the country bankers, for it was the tendency of bank notes to increase with the increase of prices. He agreed with the hon. baronet—the fault alluded to was not the fault of the country bankers; it was not the fault of individuals; but of the system which they were engaged in conducting—a system that almost compelled them to assist in creating the evils of which the country now complained. That hon. member's proposition, however, did not go far enough; for he might have added, that not only would the increase of notes follow the increase of prices, but that they would decrease with the same rapidity, when prices fell; so that the tendency always existed in the system, to aggravate the evils of the country. It would act as a stimulus to speculation when the excitement was at its height; and when the weakness always consequent on fictitious excitement followed, it would increase that weakness, and add to the extent of the evil. These country banks, as they proceeded on their present system, contradicted that beautiful principle of mechanics on which the most powerful engines were constructed. In mechanics, when two powers were to be employed in order to attain one object, the principle on which they were united was this, that when one was contracted, the other would expand—when one was employed to disadvantage, the other would exert its utmost force, and thus supporting each other as each required support, they rendered the desired object sure of attainment. The country banks did the reverse of all this: they first increased the tendency towards the evil, and afterwards increased the evil itself. Hence it followed, that what formed the vindication of the individual, also offered the strongest ground for the condemnation of the system under which that individual acted. One argument of an hon. member had alarmed him; for it seemed to go to the indefinite extension of the present system. It had been said, that the labourer was safer with the one-pound note than with the sovereign; and that when he received his note he ought to go to the savings'-bank, and there deposit it. Surely, when the labouring man was surrounded, as many must now be, with extreme distress, in consequence of the recent failures of country banks, it was not an answer to him, to say, "You are not to be pitied; the loss is all by your own fault; you might have lodged your money in a savings-bank," when, perhaps, the savings-bank was twenty miles distant from the place in which the poor man lived?—But, these were topics not immediately connected with the question before the House; he would, therefore, leave them, and confine himself strictly to it. He would request the House to consider what evils country banks had produced in the time more particularly within their own memory. And here he would beg the House not to suppose that he was inclined to overstate the evil—attributable to the circulation of the one and two pound notes of the country banks. All he meant to say was, that the tendency to speculation was increased by them, and that that circumstance, combined with the fluctuation of prices which it occasioned, was productive of real inconvenience in all cases, and of positive misery in many. It was easy to attack the measure of his right hon. friend, and to say that there was no remedy for the present evils in his resolution. Why, the resolution did not pretend to provide a remedy; it only tended to destroy that cause, which, added to excessive speculation, had produced so many distresses. The hon. member for Taunton, in criticising the resolution, had said, that it was merely skin-deep—that it was milk and water—that it was totally nugatory—that it was founded on vain principles—that the house was on fire, and that it was necessary to provide for the safety of those who were trembling in the garret. Now, he had listened with great attention to the means which the hon. member had proposed to rescue the people in the garret; and he found that the only ladder for escape which the hon. member offered to them was one which was liable to the very same exception which had been made against the measure proposed by his right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer. He was now alluding to the proposal of the hon. member for

Taunton to make silver a legal tender to any amount. One half of the hon. member's speech went to prove that that was an important measure, and worthy of serious consideration. He believed that it was so; but still it was as little calculated to give immediate relief as any proposition which could be mentioned. When he said that the hon. member's suggestion was an important one, he only meant that it deserved consideration. He was of opinion, that, if adopted, it would be necessary to accompany it with a measure to guard against any fluctuation in the price of silver; that it would be necessary to revise it from time to time; so that if there should be an increase in the quantity of silver, the man who had contracted an obligation in gold should not be allowed to discharge it in silver.—He was going, however, to take a view of the evil in which this system had placed us, when he was led, unintentionally, into another digression. He could not help thinking that if, in the year 1793, a set of banks had been established in this country, on the system of the Scotch banks, it would have escaped the danger in which it was then involved, as also the calamity which now impended over it. Now, when the hon. alderman referred to the maxims of our ancestors, and conjured the House to follow them strictly, he wished he would himself abide strictly by the advice he had given to others. It would not be an unapt illustration of the subject to refer to the state of the banking system in 1793. What was the number of failures which had taken place among country banks in that year? Why, not less than 100. In Yorkshire there were 12 commissions of bankrupt against country bankers; in Northamptonshire 7; in Lincolnshire 7; in Sussex 6; in Lancashire 5; in Leicestershire 9—all issued in the year 1793. And these commissions, it must be remembered, by no means showed the number of failures; because, by means of compositions, and in various other ways, the concerns of many of the bankers who were unable to go on were arranged so as to avoid bankruptcy. But, since these were the only data afforded him towards ascertaining any thing like the amount of failures, he would state the number of commissions issued for some time after the year 1809. In 1810, it appeared that against country bankers 26 commissions were issued; 4 in 1811; 17 in 1812; 18 in 1813; 29 in 1814; 26 in 1815; 37 in 1816; and that, in the late eventful crisis, there were 76 failures among the bankers of the country and the metropolis. For the reason he had stated, he should be justified in estimating the general amount of failures much higher than appeared by the returns of the commissions, it would not, perhaps, be too much to say, that the failures were four times as many as the bankruptcies; and it would, therefore, be a fair way of estimating the amount, by multiplying the number of commissions by four, during the series of years he had stated. Why then, he would ask, could any system be worse, or more prejudicial to every interest in the community, than one which, like the one at present subsisting, admitted of so enormous an amount of failures? Let the House now look at what had been the case, under a different system, in Scotland. It would be seen, by the evidence taken before the committee in 1819, that a Mr. Gilchrist, who had been a manager of one of the banks there for many years, was asked, how many banks had failed in Scotland within his memory. His reply was, that there had only been one; that the creditors were immediately paid 14*s.* in the pound as a dividend, and, upon the winding-up of the concern, the whole of their demands. If, then, the consequences of the system of banking had been to produce the number of failures in England which he had stated, while, during the same period, there had been only one in Scotland, was that not a strong presumptive proof that the system of the latter, if not quite perfect, was at least far preferable to that under which we had been so long acting? The mass of distress which must have been occasioned by the failures in England, was too extensive a subject to be now entered into. It had been felt not only by the commercial world; it had extended itself to the lower classes of society. He was inclined to look upon the effect which the present system of country banks had upon the payment of the wages of the labouring classes as one of the greatest of the evils it produced. It had been, he thought, satisfactorily proved, that the tendency of that system was to encourage speculation at one time, and at another to add to the languor which might affect the commercial interests of the country. For the benefit of the labouring classes chiefly it was, that he wished to see this altered, and that the manner in which their wages were paid

should be brought to a level. At present they were sometimes paid at enormous rates, and at another plunged into unlooked-for distress. He was satisfied, that very large wages, so far from being beneficial to the labouring classes, were really injurious to them. When they earned, as at some periods they did, 8*s.* or 9*s.* a day, the consequence was, that they never worked more than three or four days in a week, and the other days were spent in idleness and dissipation. Thus when the evil day came they had laid by nothing, and they were so much the worse for the unreasonably high wages they had before earned. This observation applied more particularly to that class of labourers who were employed in the manufactures of the country; but, the evil of the system was felt in a different, though not in a less severe shape by the agricultural labourer. He did not know whether the committee which had been presided over by the noble lord opposite, had gone very deeply into this subject, but for his own part he was satisfied, that the payment of agricultural labourers rested upon as unsatisfactory grounds as possible. He would not take upon himself to say in what respect this should be altered, because the subject required a more serious consideration than he was at that moment prepared to give to it; but, he was quite sure that a system could not be sound or politic, under which a man in perfect health and strength was unable to earn a sufficient sum for the support of himself and his family. Without, therefore, going into the causes of this state of things, he was quite convinced, that the restoration of the circulation of the country to something like its ancient standard, would have the effect of permanently ameliorating the condition of the labouring classes of every description. It was upon them that the distress produced by the recent failures had fallen most heavily. The man who held 500*l.* or 1,000*l.* of country bank notes, could probably afford to wait until the affairs should be wound up, or the dividend paid. It was not so with the poor man who held 5*l.*, 3*l.*, or 2*l.* To him to wait would be to lose the money altogether: the inconvenience to which he was exposed, the expense of proving his debt, and other obstacles which such a failure always produced, were fatal to his claim, and he who was most in want of compensation was often the only one who did not receive it.—Perhaps he was induced to dwell on this subject in consequence of the impression which had been made on his mind by the scenes of distress which he had witnessed in consequence of the failure of the banks in Ireland. He verily believed that the history of no country could afford instances of more aggravated misery and suffering, than those which he had himself seen in the province of Connaught. The breaking of French's bank alone produced in that part of the country which was most intimately connected with it, more poverty, and more of that misery and crime, which sprang from poverty, than any other event within his recollection. Any plan, therefore, he contended, which would enable the country to get rid for the future of these disastrous results, ought not to be discountenanced by the House, on the contrary, no pains should be spared to apply a remedy to the present evils, and permanently to prevent their recurrence.—Having thus stated the reasons which satisfied him that the present system had a positive tendency, at some times, to increase that spirit of speculation which ran to so mad a height, and at others to make the languor which prevailed still more debilitating, he would proceed to consider whether the remedy proposed by his right hon. friend was such as would prove effectual; and further, whether this was the proper time at which it ought to be applied, or whether it should be postponed. The last topic seemed to require no less consideration than the former; because, as the hon. member for Taunton said on a former evening, an operation might be necessary, but the moment for performing, it must depend upon the nature of the danger which existed. He was first led to examine the objection which had been alleged against the principle of banks, as proposed by his right hon. friend; namely, that it would be impossible to carry them into effect, because persons would not be found willing to risk their property in experiments of this nature, and that the people in general would not place sufficient confidence in those by whom the concerns of the new banking establishments should be managed. He confessed himself sanguine in the hope, that gentlemen of property would be found, many more than enough, to execute the proposed plan, who would be actuated, not by the mere desire of profit, but by the

wish to see a better, firmer, and more useful system of banking in their districts, and that they would lend the assistance of their capital and their exertions to ensure the success of such establishments. He most sincerely trusted, that the great obstacle to the proposed institutions, namely, the want of a charter, would be removed. He hoped that the directors of the Bank of England would seriously consider, whether any great advantage could result to themselves from the absence of a charter in the proposed establishments; and whether, on the other hand, great advantages would not be experienced by the country, from their having that facility afforded to them. He declared, that he could see no one advantage which the directors of the Bank of England could derive from the refusal to grant charters to country banking establishments. Unquestionably they had the right to refuse the grant if they chose; but he trusted they would refrain from exercising that right. Having had occasion to mention the directors of the Bank of England, he would add, that the conduct they had displayed during the recent crisis of distress and alarm had increased the respect which he had before entertained for them. They had been placed in a most difficult situation; they had to perform an arduous and a double duty—to act at once for the advantage of the country, and for the protection of the interests of those who were connected with them. He could not conceive it possible for any body of men to have acted better, or to have exercised more judgment, discretion, and liberality, than the directors of the Bank of England had done. He hoped they would give one further instance of liberality, by waving their right to withhold from the proposed establishments the charter which they would require. There would then be none of that want of confidence which had been anticipated; and the extended scale upon which those banks would be established, would satisfy persons of their security, and they would not hesitate to give the direction of them to individuals who would be chosen by themselves. This, he trusted, would furnish a complete answer to the objections which had been raised as to the want of confidence. The success of such institutions, he thought, was sufficiently shown by the example of Scotland, where they had subsisted for so many years, and of Ireland, where two banks of this nature had been established since the passing of the act of the last session, and which presented every prospect of success.—He now came to the conclusion of his right hon. friend, in which he concurred; namely, that it would be impossible to maintain the circulation of one and two pound notes together with a metallic currency. When the Bank of England purchased bullion with their own notes, the circulation was of necessity very much confined, and the notes were very soon returned upon the Bank. He had always thought the amount of the circulation had been overrated, and particularly by the late Mr. Ricardo, in the plan which he proposed. He insisted that it was not possible to maintain the circulation with so small a quantity of bullion as was in the country. The circulation was estimated at 24 millions; and as it was said the directors of the Bank had only four or five millions in their coffers, the greatest evils were anticipated from their stopping payment. The hon. member for Taunton had overrated the currency in stating it at 30 or 40 millions. He (Mr. Peel) should not despair that the resources of the Bank would be sufficient, and that there would be gold enough to conduct all their ordinary affairs. An hon. member had said, that it was impossible to ascertain the actual number of country bank notes in circulation, because all the returns that had been made were fallacious. Upon this point the hon. member's opinion differed from that of the hon. member for Midhurst, who had stated, in his evidence before a committee of the House, that the average circulation of country bank notes was three years. The smaller notes the hon. member thought were usually in circulation about two years and a half, and the 5*l.* and 10*l.* notes somewhat longer, so that the average might, perhaps, be taken pretty accurately at three years; and the evidence of all the country bankers, and of the engravers of the notes who had been examined, confirmed this estimate. In the last three years, from the number of notes stamped, it appeared that the amount of the circulation had been 7,600,000*l.* This was the maximum, as it appeared from the Stamp-office returns; but no deduction was made for that portion of the circulation which was always in the banker's own coffers. Every banker had also frequently a considerable amount of the notes of other country bankers, which had been given

in exchange for his own. Some deduction must be made from the maximum on both these accounts, and also on account of the reduction in the circulation, in consequence of the recent disastrous events, which it was sufficient to allude to. Perhaps, for these reasons, it would be considered an outside estimate of the country circulation to take it at 6,000,000*l*. But, even if it should be rated at 7,000,000*l*., there was no reason to believe that the energies of the country would not be sufficient to supply this sum. Since the year 1819, there had been coined and issued from the Mint 25 millions of gold. Suppose that seven or eight millions had been exported from the country, which was indeed an extravagant supposition, there were 17 millions remaining—a sum sufficient for all the purposes of circulation. He believed that the prohibiting the issue of country bank notes would be the most effectual means of introducing into circulation many sovereigns which had been kept in the coffers of country bankers; partly from a prudent motive of precaution, and partly because they chose rather to see their own notes in circulation wherever they could accomplish it.—The reasons which he had stated were those which induced him to think the remedy of his right hon. friend a good one; and he had heard nothing stated in favour of postponing its present application, which induced him to think such postponement desirable. According to the plan of his right hon. friend, all these notes would be withdrawn in three years, and their place supplied with gold; and such a measure should have his most unqualified approbation. One argument brought forward by an hon. member against the plan appeared to him most singular. The hon. member considered, that as the Bank of England was to retain its privileges till 1833, the country banks ought to have the same period allowed them to prepare for the change. Now, the Bank of England and the country banks were quite on a different footing. The Bank of England had advanced large sums to government for the charter, and consequently could not be deprived of the privileges included in that charter without the greatest injustice. The country banks had advanced no money in that way, and consequently could not claim any right or privilege to have the period extended to 1833. They wanted only time, the hon. member said. They wished the measure to be postponed for one month, in order that the state of the country might be known. Now, he saw great objections to such a course. It would be holding out a notion that it was the intention of parliament to adopt the present measure at the end of that time; the whole of the session would probably be consumed in hearing evidence, until it would be too late to act upon it at all, and the embarrassment and confusion would be prolonged to a most injurious extent. He was fully convinced, that this was the time for putting the measure into practice, and that the House had come to the question of now or never. Either the remedy must be applied at the present moment, or it must be abandoned for ever. If it were proposed to wait until a time of greater prosperity, he should answer, that such a time would, in his opinion, be less favourable than the present. In the year 1818, when a proposal had been made for taking security from the country bankers, it would be remembered, that great exertions had been made, and successfully made, to defeat that measure. It could not be expected, when a time of greater prosperity should have arrived, that the country bankers would acquiesce in any similar measure if it should then be proposed. If it were true, as stated by the hon. member for the city, that the reduction of the country bank-notes had increased the circulation, and that gold was flowing into the country day by day in a larger stream, it was the more advisable to avail themselves of that opportunity. This was a favourable time for effecting that restoration of the currency which was admitted to be so desirable, and it would be impolitic and unsafe to wait the moment of returning prosperity, which would make the country bankers more reluctant to agree to it, and more able to oppose it. To stand gazing on the bank in idle expectation, now that the river was passable, would be an irreparable mistake. The time would come when its tide would have increased —when

> "Monte decurrens velut amnis, imbres
> Quem super notas aluere ripas,
> Fervet, immensusque ruit."

His conviction that the passage would then be impossible induced him to urge it now; and, if not made now, all hope of accomplishing it must be abandoned for ever.

Mr. *Attwood* said, he had listened with great attention to the speech just delivered by the right hon. secretary; as he had listened also to the different statements of his honourable colleagues; but the conviction on his mind was, that they had altogether failed to make out any grounds for the measures they proposed, and had given none but the most inadequate and contradictory exposition of the causes and character of that condition of distress which they proposed to relieve. The arguments and course of proceeding of the right hon. secretary, indeed, though mistaken, were at least intelligible and consistent; but the arguments of his colleagues were in direct contradiction to the measures they recommended. The first origin and root of the distress under consideration, it appeared to the right hon. secretary, was to be found in the failure of some seventy country bankers, and so believing, it was consistent in him to support measures intended to limit the future circulation of the country bankers' paper, and to give it greater stability. But he desired to ask him, whether the fact were not, and if it were not well known to him, and to every gentleman whom he addressed, that it was not with the country bankers that the failures commenced? Every gentleman who heard him, knew that they began in London. Six or seven London banking-houses suspended their payments in about half that number of days, and those failures were the immediate, direct, and inevitable cause of the disasters among the country bankers. It was in London, and not in the country, that these pecuniary disorders began; in the heart of their monied system, and not in its extremities; and it was there that they must look for their cause. The failure at once of six or seven London bankers, from whatever cause it had arisen, was indeed a circumstance of great importance, and was well worthy the serious inquiry of parliament. No instance of a similar event was to be found in the pecuniary history of the country. Those houses held in their hands the active capital, the reserve for payments, the cash and funds of various kinds, of more than a hundred country banks. And, was it a matter of surprise that, under circumstances so calamitous, many of those establishments had themselves failed in the regular discharge of their engagements? It was rather matter of surprise that no greater number had failed, and that of those who had been compelled to do so, the circumstances of so few were found in such a state as that their creditors could sustain any loss [hear, hear!]. These events afforded a proof, not of the unsound character of the country circulation, or of the necessity of legislative interference with it, but, on the contrary, that the country bankers were, as a body, as he was satisfied was the case, men of solid property, whose affairs were, in general, conducted with prudence. And, what had been the course of the right hon. chancellor of the Exchequer? On the first night of the session, he had stated, with great confidence, that their distress had arisen out of the wild, extravagant, and unmeasured manner in which the issues of the country bankers had been of late years increased. Their notes had been, according to his estimate, augmented within the last two, three, or four years, in the proportion which three millions bore to 8,700,000, being nearly 300 per cent—(a calculation, indeed, perfectly erroneous; for the country bankers' notes had increased in no such degree, nor in any degree very different from that in which the Bank of England notes had increased; nor was the calculation of the right hon. gentleman warranted by the document on which he had founded it)—and upon that statement it was, mainly, that he proposed the present measures, having for their object the regulation and control of the country circulation. But, the right hon. gentleman, in the present debate, appeared to him to abandon altogether this attack on the country circulation, as being the cause of the recent distress, and to have discovered in a body of men of integrity, property, and country bankers themselves nothing but prudence, who were entitled to the confidence of the country: and, in all this he (Mr. A.) was disposed to agree with him; but then he could see no ground whatever for the present measures. The course first taken by the right hon. gentleman was intelligible, though erroneous; the second was altogether without object or consistency. The course adopted by the right hon. president of the Board of Trade was still more extraordinary. In answer to the observations of the hon. member for Northampton, who had complained, that the chancellor of the Exchequer had given no consistent explanation of the cause of the disorders his measures

were intended to cure, the president of the board of trade said, the hon. member was mistaken, for the chancellor of the Exchequer had given an exposition of that cause, and that it was the true exposition, and the one he himself adopted; it was, that their calamities had arisen from over-trading; first a wide system of over-trading, then had failed a few rotten banks, then came panic, and thus a state of almost unequalled distress was fixed on the country. But, if over-trading were the cause of the calamities under consideration, apply your remedies, if you have any, directly to that evil. Did the right hon. gentleman mean to say, that the over-trading he spoke of in spices, pepper, and such articles as he had enumerated, had any thing to do with the country-bank circulation? [Hear!] Did he mean to say, that the country-bank circulation in the agricultural districts, the mining, the manufacturing districts, had any connexion with those speculations, or those speculations with the country circulation? They were confined to London, to Liverpool, where no country notes existed; to Glasgow, where the Scotch system existed in all its perfection [hear, hear!]. Consider, then, the consistency of the right hon. gentleman. He finds the country ruined by over-trading. That was the idea of the president of the board of trade. A great empire brought to the brink of ruin by speculations in pepper, spice, dry goods, and all the balderdash of the retailer; and on these grounds he proposes two measures—to do what? one to establish Scotch banks, the greatest incentives to over-trading ever invented [hear!]; over-trading going on more widely in Scotland than even in England, and the distress there being as great; and the other to destroy one-pound notes; the distress of Lancashire, where none of them existed, being greater than in any other part of England, and which description of paper, only three or four years ago, he himself proposed, or supported, a bill, to continue, on the ground of its utility [hear, hear!]. When a person of the sense and ability of the right hon. gentleman was driven to such inconsistencies as these, it might be relied on, there was something far deeper in the causes of the distress of the country, and in those circumstances by which he was intrammelled, than had been developed to the House. He asked the right hon. gentleman whether he did not know, that before any panic arose, before a bank broke, great and alarming pecuniary embarrassments had been felt at the Treasury? [hear, hear]. Whether the pecuniary difficulties of the metropolis had not got to such a head, and the government paper fallen to so great a depreciation, as to give strong grounds to fear that the government would get nothing but its own paper in payment of taxes, and be unable, in consequence, to meet its engagements, without applying for assistance to the Bank, under circumstances which would render such assistance inconsistent with the security of that establishment? [Hear!] Was it over-trading, did he think, that caused the fall of Exchequer bills, in September, October, and November, to a discount lower than had been known for a long series of years? that caused government stock to fall 16 per cent, in the midst of peace, and with no political cause? The right hon. gentleman would have done well to show the House whence this state of things had arisen, and then would he have exhibited to them, at the same time, the real cause of the ruin of the bankers, and of those further evils which followed, and were now in progress [hear, hear!].

Mr. Attwood said, he was as little able to agree with his hon. friend, the member for Taunton, in the cause which he had assigned for the existing state of things; and he was satisfied that further consideration would show him, that he had mistaken for the cause of the present distress, what was only one of its consequences. He saw the origin of the present distressed condition of the country, in the large advances of the Bank to government, by which the resources of the Bank had been locked up in unavailable and inconvertible securities, and that body rendered unable to assist, in the emergency which had arisen, either the government or the country. Now, he confessed, that when he heard his hon. friend recapitulate the resources of the Bank, and state, amongst these resources, six or seven millions employed in Exchequer bills, and six or seven millions in government annuities, he calculated on his coming to a conclusion very different from one which represented the whole funds of that body to be locked up in unavailable and inconvertible securities. What securities could be more convertible or more available than these? The question plainly was, whence arose that state of things which rendered such securities as

these unavailable and unsaleable? If his hon. friend had described the situation of a mercantile house, and had thus quoted amongst their effects Exchequer bills, and government annuities, he would scarcely have stated that such house had locked up its resources altogether, and was unprepared to meet any emergency. In what more available shape could the Bank have employed any portion whatever of its funds? In none, except, indeed, in bullion; but of bullion they had been deprived by Mr. Peel's bill. Suppose the Bank, instead of these ten or fifteen millions employed in Exchequer bills and government annuities, had employed them in discounting commercial bills for the merchants:—would this have been a resource more available or convertible than the other? more applicable to the aid either of the government or the country? In the state of the money market which existed during the latter part of the last year (he was speaking of the period previous to the panic) could the Bank have called in money advanced to the merchants more readily than it could have disposed of Exchequer bills? The Bank could not then have called in any considerable amount of advances from the merchants, without spreading total ruin amongst the whole mercantile body. To call in discounts, would have broken the merchants; to have sold Exchequer bills would have endangered the credit of the government; and yet the security of the Bank rendered necessary one or other of these measures. This was their condition before any panic broke out, and for this condition of things it was, that an explanation was required.

He desired to make another observation on these operations of the Bank. The directors had been told, on repeated occasions, that it did not belong to them, nor become them, to regard, in the conduct of their affairs, the interests of the country. He remembered well with what arrogance this language was held in 1819 to the directors of the Bank. Those gentlemen, prior to the passing of Mr. Peel's bill, thought it their duty to represent to the ministers, that that bill would compel them to adopt steps for their own security, which they feared would spread throughout the country great and extensive ruin, and those apprehensions were fully justified by the events which followed. How were those earnest warnings received? The directors were told, that it was unsuitable presumption in them, a body of merchants, to act with any reference to the interests of the country. Their business was with their own establishment. The interests of the country were in other hands, in the hands of his majesty's ministers. Now, if the Bank had acted on these maxims in September, October, and November last, if the directors had then looked (as they were told it became them) to the interest and security of the Bank alone, and to no higher considerations, the disasters which the bankers and traders have since experienced would have first fallen on the Treasury. The course, then, adopted by the Bank directors would have been, to sell every Exchequer bill they held, and all their disposeable government securities of every kind. They would have made these securities available at whatever price they might fall to; as bankers it was their duty so to act; the consequence would have been so great a discount on Exchequer bills, as must have thrown them in upon the Exchequer in payment of taxes. The government must have received its taxes in its own paper; it would have thus been left without the means of discharging its engagements, except by assistance from the Bank, given, if at all, under circumstances in which the Bank must have hazarded its own credit to save that of the government.

This was the condition of difficulty under which the country laboured, before the existence of what they called the panic. It was preposterous, with this state of the country before them, to direct the attention of the House to nothing but such questions as the instability of bankers, and the speculations of traders. The origin of their embarrassments lay deeper, and they must take a wider view of their cause. Now, it was certainly singular, that the very measure which his hon. friend, the member for Taunton, had fixed on, as the cause of their difficulties, was one which had been adopted, in the distress of 1822, as a means of relief. The advances of the Bank to government, which he complained of, sprung from measures adopted in the distress of 1822, for the purpose of relieving the country from the pressure of Mr. Peel's bill, by throwing into circulation an additional amount of Bank notes. It afforded relief. It laid the foundation of the prosperity that followed; but Mr. Peel's bill still remained, and rendered it impossible that

such relief could be more than temporary. The increased amount of Bank notes could not exist in conjunction with that bill: what was relief in 1822, was now embarrassment. The country was then relieved by the issue of Bank notes; the notes were driven back by Mr. Peel's bill, and the distress was renewed. The plain solution of all these difficulties and inconsistencies, and of all the distress of the country, was, in fact, no other than this; that the government was engaged in attempts to fix upon the country a standard of value, different from that in which its debts, and taxes, and monied engagements of all kinds, public and private, had been formed [hear, hear!]. It was not an endeavour merely to substitute gold money for one of paper; that would have been, under proper regulations, a safe and practicable measure; but, an attempt to establish a metal money of a different value from the paper it was intended to supplant. Their plan was not merely to change the substance, or material of their money, but to alter its value, and at that moment, after ten years of unavailing efforts, they had approached no nearer their object, than when they first set out. The government had twice succeeded in establishing its metal money on the standard of Mr. Peel's bill: that money was effectually and virtually established in the two calamitous periods first of 1815–16, and next of 1821–22, and in both periods it had spread throughout the country an extent of embarrassment, confusion, and ruin, which rendered it doubtful whether the people would sink under the rash and ill-advised measures of the government, or whether the government itself would be shaken to pieces by the efforts of the people for relief. They had on neither occasion pushed that experiment to a trial. They abandoned their metal money, and gave ease and relief to the people, by measures inconsistent with its continued circulation; and, having failed in two experiments, they were now on the commencement of the third: the first consequences were the distress now suffered; and if that experiment were persisted in, the country, instead of having reason to expect relief, was on the verge of difficulties greater than any it had yet experienced.

But, it was necessary to look back more particularly to the distress of 1822, and the proceedings then and since adopted. The ministers told them, of a great and wild increase in the country bankers' notes, effected since that time, and of the evils to which it had given birth; but they had been silent respecting the increased issue of the notes of the Bank of England. In another House, indeed, this latter subject had been slightly referred to, by the noble lord at the head of his majesty's government, who had said, whilst discussing and exaggerating the increase of the country circulation, that the notes of the Bank of England had, indeed, also been increased, but in a degree very immaterial and inconsiderable. But, he desired them to recollect, that up to this time it had been held, that the country circulation was governed by that of the Bank of England, and that it could not be materially or permanently increased, except on the foundation of a previous and corresponding increase in the notes of the Bank. The contrary opinion to this was one taken up for the occasion; it was in opposition to all the principles which had been agreed on by those who were considered as authorities on the subject. That the country circulation was governed by that of the Bank, was the maxim of the bullion report of 1810, of the different committees which had since sat; and if he did not mistake, was asserted by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Huskisson) in his elaborate pamphlet on the bullion question. But, he would show them, what the increase of the notes of the Bank of England in reality was. That body had effected, prior to 1822, a great reduction of its issues, in order to prepare for cash payments on the provisions of Mr. Peel's bill. The reduction effected, up to the end of 1821, left their circulation at about fifteen millions, taking notes of 5*l.* and upwards. In November 1821, the notes of the Bank in circulation were 14,800,000*l.* The circulation for the corresponding period of 1822, he had not the account of. But, in November 1823, the amount would be found to have increased to 19,800,000*l.*; in November 1824 to 21,200,000*l.* In February 1825, the amount was 21,200,000*l.* also; and in March 1825, beyond which period their accounts did not go, the amount was 19,300,000*l.* Here, then, was an increase of no less than 6,400,000*l.*; not a trifling and immaterial addition to the notes of the Bank, but an increase which amounted to full half of its active

and effectual circulation; and, to this increase of the notes of the Bank of England it was — a forced circulation, as he should presently show, issued on advances to government, and bearing all the characters of government money; —it was to this he would venture to affirm, that the country owed whatever circumstances of evil or of good, had arisen from the growth of their paper money during this period; all that increase in the paper of the country bankers which had followed, and was no more than proportionate to it, all that advance in prices which they had witnessed, speculations and over-trading, if the chancellor of the Exchequer would have it so: and, to the subsequent reduction of this circulation it was also—a reduction forced on the Bank by Mr. Peel's bill, as the increase had been forced on them by the demands of government, a diminution effected by one measure of the government as the increase had been effected by another; — to this reduction it was, that the country had to ascribe all the calamities they had recently gone through, the sufferings they then endured; and to this same reduction they would have to ascribe also, all that further scene of wider calamities, severer sufferings and greater dangers, which then impended over the country, into which they were then plunging, and plunging the more rapidly, in consequence of measures proposed for their relief [hear, hear!].

He had said, that the increased circulation of the Bank of England referred to, was a forced circulation, and he would show how it had been effected. The notes of the Bank had reached their lowest point of diminution at the end of 1821. That was a period of dismal calamity and distress. The session of 1822 opened, and the House rang with demands on the Bank to increase the issues of their notes. Projects of every kind were brought forward by the administration to effect this object. At one time, it was proposed that the Bank should lend four millions upon land. Then, that four millions should be lent to government; then to parishes on the security of the rates. Now, to put the object of these schemes out of doubt, he would read to the House the explanation given at the time by the right hon. gentleman, Mr. Huskisson. "The government," said that gentleman, "disclaimed the advance as an accommodation for the service of the year, and he was glad they did so; but they were willing to use it as the means of getting *the sum into circulation, and in the hope of affording some relaxation to the existing pressure.*" These projects were only partially executed, or found impracticable and abandoned; but were followed by that most extraordinary scheme denominated the dead weight; the effect and object of which was—to throw Bank notes into circulation founded on advances to government. Some gentlemen were of opinion, that Bank notes, by whatever means forced out, could not exist in excess; that they would, if excessive, be returned at once on the Bank. But, in what manner could notes thus forced into circulation by advances to government, find their way back to the Bank? The mercantile world in 1824, when these notes were at the highest, owed nothing to the Bank, and could therefore repay nothing. It would be seen that, the credit of the Bank continuing, there existed but two methods by which any one of these notes could, whether excessive or otherwise, be withdrawn from the circulation. One was, the repayment of the advance to government, on which they had been issued. This advance still however continued. The remaining mode was, in exchange for gold [hear! from Mr. Peel]. But notes would not be carried to the Bank for gold, their credit remaining good, until it should become the interest of some person to demand gold. An individual would find gold which he could not employ, as great a burthen as notes which he held in excess. But, it would be sent abroad? Not unless the rate of exchange rendered that operation profitable. When Bank notes were issued in excess, to whatever extent, the exchanges must first alter before any one of them would be taken to the Bank for gold to export; and that alteration in the exchanges would not be effected without a previous alteration in our dealings with other countries; arising out of an alteration in the monied prices of all property and commodities; in fact, without a real and effectual alteration in the value of money.

Let the character, then, of these measures be considered. They had forced notes into circulation by one measure of the government; and when these notes were fully absorbed in the circulation of the country, they drove them back by another. They had adopted mea-

sures producing, of necessity, a depreciation in the value of money, and left standing Mr. Peel's bill, which, when that depreciation was perfectly established, must of necessity raise the value of money again. To what extent, then, had this operation been carried, this debasement of money by the government, and its subsequent enhancement? There existed three methods of determining this question. They might take the proportionate addition, which the increased circulation of the notes of the Bank bore to its previous circulation; or they might judge by the alteration effected in the general scale of prices; either or both of which measures would prove that money had been depreciated first, and then enhanced in value, to an extent of from 20 to 50 per cent; for the addition to the notes of the Bank had been six millions added to fifteen millions, and the advance in prices had been proportionate. Or, lastly, they might refer to the price of gold. But, in judging by this last criterion, they must bear in mind, that gold had been kept down by law, and by the consequent supply from the Bank, which, in 1824 and 1825, had been compelled to throw into the market its stock of gold, of perhaps ten or twelve millions, at a fixed and a low price. The question came to be then, what would have been the price of gold in 1824, and early in 1825, if the doors of the Bank had then been closed to gold payments, or if the Bank, still paying in gold, had been at liberty to demand the best price it could obtain? No man acquainted with the trade in exchanges, would, he was satisfied, deny, that gold would, under such circumstances, have experienced a great advance. He had himself repeatedly put that question in 1824, and early in 1825, to individuals, some of whom then heard him, members of the House, who were engaged in exchange operations. He had said, "there is now a great demand for gold: what would be the price of gold if no supply could now be procured from the Bank?" and the reply was uniformly, "gold would advance, probably, 20, or 30, or 40 per cent." If that were the state of things then, they had all the marks of depreciation perfect and complete. Their money had been depreciated, its value altered, and this had been done by acts of the government. On this most calamitous and fatal subject of the currency, it had been much the custom of many of those who discussed it in that House, to condemn with indignation those operations by which different governments had, whether pressed by necessity, or from whatever motive, at particular times, debased the standard of their metal money, and at other times enhanced its value. But, in what did the essential vice of these operations consist? Not in the merely joining together two metals, both alike harmless; not in alloying gold with copper; but, in unsettling by this means the value of all property; in introducing by this operation fraud into all contracts; and in thus robbing one half of the community for the benefit of the other half. But, was not all this effected as completely by increasing, by forced measures at one time the quantity of paper money, and diminishing the quantity at another time, as by diminishing or increasing the weight of the coin? Let any man answer, if he found, during this tampering and juggling with paper money, his property steady in value; if he could rely without ruin on money as a measure of property? [hear!] The debasement of metal money, and the enhancement of it, when referred to in that House, was commonly stigmatized with terms of abhorrence; it was denominated fraudulent, iniquitous, and disgraceful. Of the justice of these epithets, he should give no opinion. He neither asserted nor denied it. But this much he would at least assert, that no terms of reprobation or reproach had been ever with justice applied, to any measure of any government, which, under whatever circumstances, had debased metal money or enhanced it, which terms were not with equal justice applicable to the operations he had then explained [hear, hear!].

They had seen, then, the extent to which the notes of the Bank of England had increased. An increase of the country-bank circulation had followed in a proportion admitted to be at least equal; and he would now proceed to show how prices had advanced with the increased quantity of money. The notes of the Bank were reduced to their lowest degree by the end of 1821. The country-bank circulation was equally low. Fifteen millions was the circulation of the Bank. Four millions only was the amount of notes stamped for the country bankers in the year 1821. But little money existing in circulation, money could be obtained only in small quantities for property and com-

modities. In other words, prices were low. Forty-three shillings would be found to be the price of the quarter of wheat for the average of the year 1822. That fact alone explained the condition of the country: it stood on the brink of ruin. Forty-three shillings a quarter for wheat was, in fact, the price of Mr. Peel's bill —as high a price as would ever be obtained in money, of the value then fixed, for any average of years; when no attempt was made to escape temporarily from its pressure. Gentlemen showed a great anxiety to believe, that with Mr. Peel's bill high prices might yet be obtained; but if any individual was prepared to maintain, that more than 40*s.* or 50*s.* a quarter could be obtained for wheat, on an average of years, in money so fixed, he would desire him to give his reason for that opinion. No one had yet done so. All property and commodities were, in 1822, equally low with wheat; the prices of all were equally ruinous. But the currency was, in what was called, a wholesome and healthful state. Their paper money circulated side by side with gold money. No demand on the Bank, no exportation of gold. At the prices commodities then bore, gold was brought into the country. And as to that question, so often discussed, respecting the difficulty which the country might experience in procuring gold for its circulation; some gentlemen maintained, that it would be difficult, or impossible; others would not believe, that a great and wealthy country like this, abounding in commodities of all kinds, could be unable to procure any given or necessary quantity of gold. The question was mistaken. It was not a question of quantity, but of price. Not whether the country could obtain five millions more or less of gold, but whether it could obtain gold at the low price which their law fixed, of 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* an ounce; and that it could only do, by the reduction of all its commodities to a scale equally low. A wealthy country could obtain its share of the precious metals, a share proportioned to its wealth and commodities; but a poor country would procure its share also, which would be equally in proportion to the extent of its wealth and commodities. The share of the precious metals which any country rich, or poor, could maintain, if there was any truth in experience, would be in the proportion of about half an ounce of gold against a quarter of wheat, which gave 40*s* or 50*s.* a quarter of this money, and no more. If a country found it necessary to fix a higher price for wheat than this, and desired the price to be paid in money of the precious metals, that object could not be effected by attempting to get possession of a greater quantity in weight of gold or silver; it must either be content with a low price, or alter the standard of its money; and this country possessed no means or power of obtaining a high price of wheat, other than by altering temporarily or permanently, secretly or openly, the provisions of Mr. Peel's bill. All the experience of the last ten years confirmed this. They desired to obtain a high price for commodities, and to fix by law gold at a low price; and the consequence had been, that wherever, by issues of paper money, they succeeded in raising prices, gold disappeared. It could not be made to circulate after the rate of 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* an ounce in exchange for high commodities, for iron at 12*l.* a ton, for copper at 140*l.* and for wheat at 70*s.* a quarter. A drain on gold regularly commenced, drove in the paper money; and when commodities had, in consequence, fallen, iron to 8*l.*, copper to 100*l.*, and wheat to 45*s.*, then gold travelled back. All their measures since the peace had been one unceasing effort to reconcile contradictions, and achieve impossibilities. Whenever prices were high, and the country prosperous, then commenced a demand for gold, and the Bank of England became alarmed for its own security: their notes were then drawn in, and prices reduced: gold then returned to the Bank: that body was in perfect ease and security, but the country in a state of distress bordering on ruin. These two circumstances, a prosperous state of the country, and an easy condition of the Bank, which body regulated their money, had never yet been united at any period since the peace, and never would be united whilst they attempted to stand on their present standard of money.

But to return to the price of grain as it had followed the increase of paper money since 1822, 43*s.* was then the price of the quarter of wheat. Bank notes had been reduced to fifteen millions, the country circulation demanded only four millions of stamps in a year. The notes of the Bank were then increased to twenty-one millions, the country stamps to six or eight millions; the price of wheat advanced, in 1823, to 51*s.*, the

average of the year; in 1824, it advanced to 62s., to 66s., and in March 1825, to 69s. Now, when it was considered, that this advance in the price of wheat was accompanied with an equal advance in the price of all other agricultural productions, and of commodities and property of every kind, could there remain any doubt as to the cause of this rise of prices? It was in the midst of what they had been pleased to call over-production, that this regular and steady advance commenced. Money being thrown into circulation in greater abundance by the Bank of England and by the country bankers, was given in greater quantity for property and goods; money fell in value, prices rose. Was it fit, then, that measures should be proposed to deal with this paper money, to drive it from circulation, and that the ministers who proposed these measures should conceal from the view of the House the important interests which these measures were calculated to affect? Were they to go on entirely blinded to all the important consequences of their own proceedings, and to pass laws affecting prices, and the value of money and its quantity, with their attention directed to nothing beyond speculations and over-trading? The right honourable chancellor of the Exchequer had told them in what degree the amount of notes stamped for the country bankers had increased; that the amount stamped in 1822 was four millions only, and then the quantity increased first to six millions, and then to eight millions, and to nearly nine millions; and was not this, he said, "sufficient to account for all the spirit of over-trading and rash speculation which had existed?" He would tell him that it accounted for something more than speculation and over-trading. It accounted for remunerative prices. It accounted for rents, which in 1822 had no existence in the country [hear, hear!], which the agricultural committee had told them were paid out of capital. It produced taxes, he would tell the chancellor of the Exchequer; that productiveness of the revenue which he had boasted of, and in short all that whole state of things which constituted prosperity, and which he had told them he was convinced rested on a solid basis, but which basis was no more solid than was that paper money, which, in utter ignorance of its character, he proposed to deal with. This paper money had produced wages; that employment for the labourer, which had changed their innumerable population from a people driven to despair, oppressed by hunger, on the verge of rebellion, and taking up arms against the government, into a body of subjects at once the most orderly and powerful, the most loyal and contented that had ever existed on the earth; full of prosperity and satisfaction, and willing enough, with the chancellor of the Exchequer, to ascribe their prosperity to the perfection and profound wisdom of the House of Commons; but equally prone, he desired to tell him, to ascribe their calamities, whenever they suffered them, to the corruption of the House of Commons also, to its incompetence and its folly; and in so doing, they gave an example to the right hon. gentleman, which it would become his consistency to imitate [hear!]. He urged, therefore, the House most earnestly, and his majesty's ministers more particularly, to pause in the measures they were pursuing. Greater interests depended on those measures than they dreamt of, and weightier events would follow them. In every step which they took, the ground before and around them was beset with dangers, of the character and nature of which, they had shown an entire ignorance. He urged them to call to mind that whole series of errors which had characterized every measure parliament had hitherto taken on this subject, and the calamities, all but fatal, which had followed them; from that first and portentous law of the year 1797, adopted by parliament in utter ignorance of its character, without being accompanied with any one measure calculated to provide against the evils obviously calculated to flow from it, down to these present measures, which, in equal ignorance of their character, were now proposed to parliament. Had they understood the character and tendency of the act of 1819, when that measure was passed? What spectacle had they exhibited to the country when, in passing that law, they had talked of a fall of prices to follow of three or of four per cent, and of difficulties, worthy only to be smiled at, and of setting that question at rest for ever; and had boasted of the unanimity of a vote, by which, amidst disorder approaching to tumult, and violence unbecoming the character of a grave and deliberative assembly, they then adopted a law, which had done more than oppress the people; which had put at hazard the safety of the government, and had shaken

the security of the empire to its base. He desired his majesty's ministers to look back to those declarations, which so recently as the latter part of the last session of parliament only they had made, in a body, without necessity; almost without occasion; that under no circumstances which it was possible to conceive of misfortune or distress, would they ever again consent to a restriction in cash payments at the Bank. He now desired them to call to mind those declarations; and he asked them how long it was, that those determinations, so solemnly pronounced in the face of the country, were held firm? Would they now repeat them? If they dare not, what confidence did they expect from parliament in any measures on those subjects which they proposed? Did they expect the House of Commons to consider with patience their measures, if proposed with confidence? If the recollection of all the errors, dangers, and sufferings, which had distinguished all their measures on this subject, did not infuse caution at least into his majesty's ministers; if it could not teach them the necessity of moving with consideration and circumspection, with doubt and dismay, in every step they took; if all this failed to impart caution at least to his majesty's ministers, though it might fail to give them wisdom, though it might fail to show them how to extricate the state from the complication of evils in which, by their proceedings it was involved; there remained no hope for the country whilst its interests were in their hands [hear, hear!].

The plain and undeniable explanation, then, he repeated, of their situation was this. They had relieved the distress of 1822 by pouring notes into the circulation. In 1825, Mr. Peel's bill drove those notes back upon the issuers. The increased amount of every description of paper money, both notes of the country bankers, and bills of all kinds, which had followed the increased issues of the Bank of England, were of necessity to be driven in also, when the notes of the Bank of England on which they had been founded, were withdrawn. The demand on the Bank for gold and for reduction commenced in 1824. Early in 1825 the work of reduction commenced. Pecuniary embarrassments immediately followed, and proceeded along with the reduction of the issues of the Bank, till in December the failure of the London, and then of the country bankers produced what they called the panic. Its origin was in London. How had it been put a stop to? By issuing again an increased amount of Bank of England notes. But that issue could not be permanently maintained. It was incompatible with Mr. Peel's bill. The Bank had been praised for the boldness of its conduct in December last. But, what was the nature of the risque, it had encountered? A risque imposed by Mr. Peel's Bill: and here now, as formerly, lay the source of their embarrassments. High prices and an abundant circulation were necessary, but neither could exist permanently in conjunction with the low price of gold which this bill attempted to fix. This was the source of their difficulties; and all measures of relief founded on other views, as would those which were now proposed, would lead them only to evils more complicated, and to greater dangers.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, that after the admirable speech of the hon. member for Callington, he could have little to add, and the less, as he (Mr. G.) in the main, agreed with the right hon. Secretary for the Home Department, who had preceded him, in his view of the general working of the banking system. His object in rising was, therefore, principally for the sake of giving notice, that in case the House should go into a committee on the chancellor of the Exchequer's resolutions, he should move an amendment to leave out the words "or by the Bank of England." Mr. G. said, that the fluctuations and distresses which had been suffered by every interest, and most, perhaps, by the agricultural, were attributable to the blunders and narrowness of view, of the Bullion committee of 1810; the members of which seemed to have held a one-pound note before their eyes, and not to have been able to see through it. It had not been his good fortune to have enjoyed the acquaintance of the late Mr. Horner. He had no doubt that learned and much lamented gentleman came from Edinburgh profoundly versed in Scotch metaphysics and English law; and he gave him credit for the possession of every grace and every virtue that could adorn humanity; but, the question of the currency of this country he did not understand; and, consequently, though in the report of that committee he acknowledged a depreciation of 20 per cent, he did not perceive that it was the amount of debt and of taxation which, swelling our numerical reckonings

in every direction, had already passed the line in which it was possible to meet them in the golden coin of the realm of standard weight, and, after all that had passed in the interim, the right hon. Secretary, in bringing in his bill, of 1819, had acted under a degree of error still more surprising.

Mr. Gurney said, that in his view of the whole subject, it consisted of two parts; which, though much mixed up in these debates, it was necessary to distinguish —the one, the general state of the minor currency; the other, the present mercantile distress. Now it should be recollected, that in 1824, the circulating medium had so adapted itself to the wants of the internal traffic of the country, that no prices were extravagant, but every interest might be considered to be at ease. Towards the end of that year, from the sudden and enormous rise in the prices of the shares of one company, on which even the instalments had not been paid—company after company, bubble after bubble, sprung up; so that by the first of February 1825, there were 114 projects, for the most part utterly absurd, in existence; the shares of which amounted nominally to about a hundred millions. These paper shares might probably pass from hand to hand as an imaginary property of from five and twenty to thirty millions; which, by the first of November, were utterly extinguished. We were brought to the end of a South-Sea year; and no one could wonder at the concussion from the fall of such a water-spout. It was on this paper flooding the market, that prices of all things had been constantly rising, and, commercial adventure had run wild; and not on the unhappy one-pound notes, which formed the subject of the chancellor of the Exchequer's resolutions. Now, he repeated, that to the issue of the one-pound notes of private bankers, there had been no greater enemy than himself from the beginning; but, it must be obvious, that if these notes were to be called in, the only possible way of doing it, without bringing every thing to a stand-still, would be the substituting those of the Bank of England in the first instance, let the final arrangement be what it might. At present, gold was only paid away to be hoarded. The conduct of the Bank of England had been, in this crisis, beyond all praise. Without their notes, nothing could go on; and, if they were withdrawn, the country would be left without a circulation, or any means of liquidating the ordinary transactions between man and man.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* rose, and said:—Before I proceed, Sir, to address the House, as briefly as I can, upon the very interesting and important subject which now engages its attention, I beg leave to set myself right with some honourable gentlemen, by assuring them, that in whatever I may say, of the present system of our currency, and of the necessity of a speedy reform in it, I do not mean, in the slightest degree, to impute blame, or imply disrespect, to a body of men, whose character has been drawn into the debate; the administrators of the system, as it at present stands [hear, hear!]. So far, Sir, from wishing to disparage the country bankers, I think they have been of great and essential service to the country. I believe them to have been the medium of communicating a wholesome stimulus to industry, and of directing into useful and legitimate channels, the industry and enterprise of the country. I believe that, if they have acted unadvisedly—if they have done any *thing* amiss—it is to be attributed to the nature of the system, under which they have been compelled to act, and not to any abuse of the power lodged in their hands.

Such, Sir, being my sincere opinion, I have thought it proper to make this distinct protest at the outset; because I am aware that, in the ardour of discussion, it not unfrequently happens, that, from misapprehension on the part of the hearer, or inadvertency on the part of the speaker, expressions are understood in a sense very different from that in which they are intended, that what was meant for the matter, is supposed to apply to the person. I wish to guard against any such mistake of my intentions. When I say, for instance, of the country bankers, what I said, upon a former occasion, of the directors of the Bank of England—that however respectable they may be in their particular capacity, they are, nevertheless, not competent to be intrusted with the prerogative of the Crown, I say that which I hope I may be permitted to say without offence; and I am sure I say it without the smallest design to impeach the purity, or to derogate from the importance of their character [hear, hear!]. I attach no blame to the individuals, but only to the system, which they are the agents of carrying into effect.

I will observe also, with reference to this part of the subject, that it appears to me a mistake to suppose, that this question

may not be brought to a practical issue at the present moment, with less danger and less inconvenience, than at any other period. For, I state it as my sincere opinion, that the great mass of the country banks now in existence, are fixed upon a stable foundation [hear, hear!]. They have stood out the storm which has thrown down weaker fabrics to the earth —and there is, therefore, a reasonable presumption, that they have nothing to fear from the pressure, whatever that may be—(though I believe the apprehension of that pressure to be excessively exaggerated)—which the proposed measures for effecting a change in the condition of the currency, may bring upon them.

Impressed as I am, Sir, with this conviction, I think, that those persons would argue as illogically, as they would act unreasonably, who, after the passing of the measure now under our consideration, should proceed to act with harshness, if a country banker, towards his creditor; or with precipitation, if a holder of country bank notes, in hurrying with them to the banker, for immediate payment in gold. My opinion is, that this measure is absolutely necessary for the due regulation of our currency; but that it will not justify, or call for, either one or other of these courses in the two descriptions of persons interested in its result.

Sir, I felt anxious to clear the ground of these invidious imputations, before I proceeded to deal with the question before the House, with that frankness and sincerity which it demands.

Sir, the hon. gentleman who spoke last has divided the subject into two parts; and his speech furnishes the best answer to the several objections that have been urged against the proposition of my right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, by the several speakers who preceded the hon. gentleman. On the one hand, the measure has been described as wholly inefficient for the end proposed —mere milk and water; on the other hand, it has been contended, that it will bring a pressure on the monied, commercial, manufacturing, and landed interests, which the country, in its present weak condition, is ill able to bear.

Now, Sir, both these characters of the plan of my right hon. friend, cannot be true; but, both of them may be, and both are, incorrect. My hon. friend has shown how unfounded and fallacious is the first assertion, of the inefficiency of the measure, by pointing out how gratuitously it has been assumed to apply to causes, with which it does not profess to deal. On the other hand, he has admitted, that the pressure is exaggerated; and he has come to the conclusion which is expressed in the resolution of my right hon. friend.

Sir; one of the causes of the present distress—and it is one with which we do not presume, or attempt, to deal—has been that extravagant spirit of speculation, so well described by several hon. members, and by none better than by the hon. member for Northampton* (not now in his place), who in a speech which displayed the greatest ingenuity and ability, and, in a manner which came home to the feelings of all who heard him, brought fully and fairly before the House, the true character of that prevailing mischief. When the King's Speech informed us, that "some of the causes of the present embarrassments, lie without the reach of direct parliamentary interposition," to what else could it be intended to allude, but to those speculations which, at the time, fixed the public gaze, and so immediately excited their appetency, as to cover the nation, in the eyes of foreign states, if not with disgrace, at least with ridicule? The most wild and incoherent schemes were started—projects which sprung with the dawn, and expired before the setting of the sun, in whose beams they glittered for a few hours, and then fell; a puff of vapour sent them soaring towards the skies;—the puncture of a pin brought them to the earth. I really do not know, Sir, what legislative interference could possibly effect in such a case. I do not know how a measure could be framed, to deal with those speculations of unreasoning avarice, which would not, at the same time, have borne so hard on honest industry and rational enterprise, that it would have been likely to do more harm than good. The inordinate appetite for gain, if left to itself, could not fail to work its own cure, through its own certain disappointment.

The public mind did, for a season, run riot; but is it affirmed that of this temporary insanity the conduct pursued by the country bankers was the cause? It has been, not fairly, inferred, from the observation of my right hon. friend, that

* Captain Maberly.

he so considered it, and that he therefore calls upon the House to agree to the present resolution. No, Sir, I do not charge the country bankers with having originated this spirit of speculation; but I think it impossible to deny that the country banks were a source whence this inordinate speculation derived its aliment. The object of my right hon. friend is to have "the current in that place dammed up;" leaving the originating causes of that speculation to be operated upon, not so much by any specific measures which any human legislation could devise, as by the returning good sense of the country, by painful experience and by awakened reflection.

Sir; there is another prejudice which it may be necessary to dispel, before I can expect the House to hear me upon this subject with patience and indulgence. I allude, Sir, to the fashion, set by the hon. member for Taunton,* on a former evening, and sedulously followed by the hon. alderman,† the member for Sudbury, this evening, of imputing to every man who thinks it possible to apply the principles of philosophy to questions of a practical nature, the character of theorist and enthusiast, a person disposed to resign the greatest benefits, and to sacrifice the dearest interests of the community, in order to give effect to his own abstract principles. The hon. member for Taunton—in a speech, the ingenuity of which I admit, but which was, I think, one of the most inaccurate in its facts, and unfair in its inferences, that I ever heard delivered in this House—has endeavoured to fix upon me, this character. I have no right, perhaps, to complain that, in the heat of debate, an hon. member should impute to me words which I never uttered, and things which I never did. If such an imputation results from a genuine error, although it leads to an unjust inference, I rest satisfied with simply denying the fact. But, Sir, the case is different, when I find that, out of this error, an inference is to be drawn;—when I find it imputed to me, that in the debates on the report of the Bullion-committee of 1811, I voted for the immediate resumption of cash payments—when I find this stated, and, more than this, the House solemnly warned by an hon. member, how they allow themselves to follow a blind guide who would precipitate them from the solid and safe rock of a paper, into the troubled and tempestuous sea of a metallic currency—when, Sir, I see myself thus misrepresented, for the purpose of influencing the votes of the House—I am far from saying that the error was other than unintentional—but I must remark, that I never recollect to have heard any hon. gentleman fall into an error more fortunate for his argument. Sir, I not only did not vote, on that occasion, in the way in which I am said to have voted, but—

Mr. *Baring*.—I rise, Sir, to complain of the course which the right hon. gentleman is taking. I really do not think it quite fair, after I have apologized to the right hon. gentleman for the mistake into which I fell, that he should charge me with making that mistake intentionally [Cries of "No, no, unintentional"].

Mr. Secretary *Canning* continued.—I spoke of the error as *not* being intentional; but, I submit to the hon. gentleman, that the part which I took in 1811, having been, however unintentionally, mis-stated, that it is necessary for me to set myself right with the House. I voted, on the discussion of the report of the Bullion-committee, for all the resolutions moved by the late Mr. Horner, which went to affirm the true principles of our monetary system; and I voted *against* that resolution which fixed a peremptory and short period for opening the Bank to cash payments. I thought great good would result from recording what appeared to me a sound opinion as to the principles of our monetary system: but, although I did so, I by no means agreed with the conclusion come to by the Bullion-committee; that the existing system being wrong, it ought therefore to be immediately—in the middle of a war—abandoned. The only proposition which I ventured to submit to the House, in the Debates of 1811, was not a theoretical, but a practical proposition. It was this—that, during the continuance of the suspension of cash payments, the Bank should desist from either augmenting its capital or its dividends. Wise or unwise, this proposition was, at least, a practical one, and exhibited, therefore, the very reverse of that theoretical disposition, which has been charged upon me. And if, Sir, on the present occasion, I am for withdrawing, within a limited time, the one-pound notes from circulation, it is not from the mere love of theory, but because I have seen it practically

* Mr. A. Baring.
† Alderman Heygate.

proved, in the experience of years which have elapsed since the Bullion-committee sat, that the circulation of the small notes cannot co-exist with a metallic currency [hear, hear!].

The House, Sir, cannot, I think, follow more wholesome advice than that which has been given to them by the worthy alderman, who recommended us to tread in the footsteps of our forefathers: and doing this, no part of their policy will be found more strongly marked, than was that for which I am now contending, up to the year 1797. Let the House look back to the first period of our commercial distress in modern times—I mean the year 1793. About that period, Sir, Mr. Burke —no mean authority—published a book on the French Revolution, almost every sentence of which, however canvassed and disputed at the time, has been justified by the course of subsequent events; and almost every prophecy has been strictly fulfilled. One passage in that book is so completely to the worthy alderman's purpose, that I am surprised he did not recollect it upon the present occasion. Mr. Burke, in describing the paper system of the French Revolutionary government in 1793, took occasion to contrast it with that sort of paper currency, which, until then, had always circulated in this country. "They imagine," he observed, "that our flourishing state in England is owing to the Bank paper, and not the Bank paper to the flourishing condition of our commerce, to the solidity of our credit, and to the total exclusion of all idea of power from any part of the transaction. Our paper is of value in commerce, because in law it is of none. It is powerful on Change, because in Westminster-hall it is impotent. In payment of a debt of twenty shillings, a creditor may refuse all the paper of the Bank of England." Mr. Burke concluded his observations on this subject by saying—what I very much wish we could say now,—"never was a scarcity of cash, and an exuberance of paper, a subject of complaint in this nation." Such, Sir, was the state of the paper currency in England, up to the year 1793; and to this good old system of our forefathers I am as anxious to return, as the worthy alderman, or any other hon. member, can possibly be.

Now, Sir, I will inquire, what are the objections which oppose themselves to the measure of my right hon. friend. The hon. member for Taunton has stated, that government has so embarrassed and clogged up the Bank of England, that that body is no longer able to manage the circulating medium of the country. Another hon. member has, this evening, followed in the same strain. I trust, Sir, that I shall not be supposed to mean any thing uncivil to those hon. gentlemen, when I state them to be totally in error; and by going over the paper which I hold in my hand, point by point, I hope I shall convince the House, that, in every item of the account, they are decidedly mistaken.

The hon. member for Taunton has stated the different sums for which, as he alleges, the Bank has become security for the government. In the first place, there is, he says, a sum of 6,000,000*l.* which the Bank has advanced for the government, on account of Exchequer bills. The hon. member next stated, what are called the "deficiencies;" namely, the advances made by the Bank, on the faith and credit of the receipts of the current quarter, amounting, as he states, to 7,000,000*l.* but which, in point of fact, amounted only on the 5th of January, to 5,500,000*l.*; and I can assure the House, that, at the time at which I am now speaking, they are reduced far below that sum. The hon. member has fixed the sum necessary for paying off the dissentient holders of the 4 per cents at 2,000,000*l.* The Dead Weight, as it is termed, he has described as swallowing up 8,000,000*l*; though, in fact, it requires only 6,500,000*l.*; and lastly, he has noticed the sum advanced by the Bank on mortgages, which amounted to 1,500,000*l.*

Now, Sir, the objection of the hon. member does not seem to be so much directed against the amount, as against the nature of the different charges. The tendency of the hon. member's speech was this—that his majesty's government have committed the crime of laying this heavy load on the shoulders of the Bank, and that the Bank, in consequence thereof, has been rendered incaple of exercising its proper functions.

Now, Sir, to take the hon. member's items in the inverse order of their introduction. In the first place, I must observe, that the sums lent by the Bank, in the way of mortgage, are no more a concern of the government than they are a concern of the hon. member himself. The Bank, Sir, thought fit—and I certainly do not blame them for so thinking—in a

period of great public pressure, to do what appeared to them to be a great public good; at the same time that, by so making use of their resources, they were likewise benefitting themselves. They thought they had a right to obtain a just and fair advantage for the body of proprietors, by advancing, upon landed security, the sum of 1,500,000*l.* Whether they acted wisely, or unwisely, in entering upon this speculation, is a question which I do not propose to determine; and one with which the government had nothing to do. It was entirely in their mercantile capacity, and in the exercise of their mercantile discretion, that the Bank made the advance in question. It might be bad, or it might be good—but, it was a transaction with which the government had not any thing, even in the slightest degree, to do [hear, hear!].

Sir, as to the Dead Weight, I profess, as honestly for myself, as the worthy alderman professed for himself, that I have attempted to understand the arrangement. Though, Sir, it does not always follow—and in saying so, I mean nothing offensive to the worthy alderman—that the attempt to understand a subject, enables a man to arrive at that understanding [a laugh]. Sir, I am serious. I do honestly confess, that the arrangement of the Dead Weight I do not understand. But, whether the Bank made a prudent bargain, or a foolish one, with the government; or whether the government made a wise bargain, or an improvident one, with the Bank—has nothing at all to do with the present question. That which was done was simply this—the government sold an annuity, and the Bank bought one. The Bank took up the transaction entirely in their mercantile capacity. They might, if they had so pleased, have gone into the market the very next day, and disposed of their purchase to the best bidder. The government were no more responsible for the Bank holding in their hands that which they had bought of the government, than they were accountable for any indifferent transaction of that body. They had no more to do with it, than they would have had to do with the conduct of the hon. member for Taunton, if he, having taken a share in a loan, chose to keep that share entirely in his own hands, when, if he so pleased, he might have sold it. If inclined, the Bank had the power of getting rid of this bargain. They find, I have no doubt, that they can make a greater profit by retaining it; and, such being the real state of the case, I must withdraw the sum connected with the Dead Weight, from the hon. member's argument; because, it must be evident to every gentleman who hears me, that if, in consequence of this bargain, the Bank are incapacitated from doing any act which may be considered beneficial to the country, it is their own fault, and not the fault of the government [hear, hear!].

Thus, Sir, I think I have fairly disposed of 6,700,000*l.* out of the 24,500,000*l.* with which the hon. member so confidently asserted that the government had loaded the Bank. The next item to which the hon. member adverted, was the sum of 2,000,000*l.* for paying off the dissentients on the 4 per cents. But this sum is in a regular course of payment; indeed, my right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, intimates to me, that the debt will be entirely liquidated, in the course of the present year [hear, hear!].

Then comes the amount of Exchequer bills, and the deficiency bills, as they are called. And, with regard to these deficiencies, where, I ask, is the fairness and justice of the hon. member's argument? The hon. member thinks fit to assume, because the Bank is called upon to pay the quarterly dividends upon certain days, that that great body must therefore be considered to be out of pocket, during the whole quarter, to a large and embarrassing amount. The hon. member took no notice whatever of the constant and gradual reduction of the sum advanced. So far from it, the Bank may have, during a period of the quarter, large balances belonging to the government in their hands. The fact is this. The Bank, undertake to make certain payments on a certain day, on behalf of the government; and they are in the constant receipt of a portion of the revenues of the country, sufficient at once to repay gradually their past advances, or to prepare them for the advances of the ensuing quarter.

As I am not, Sir, very conversant in matters of this nature, I will endeavour to explain my view of the case, by supposing a parallel case in private life. I will suppose that a nobleman or gentleman, possessed of a large landed property, is bound to pay an annuity, say, of 4,000*l.* a-year, in four regular quarterly payments; and that he assigns to his agent the rents

and profits of certain parts of his estates, in order to meet this annuity. He would say to that agent—"All you have to do is to make my quarterly payments for me, and to reimburse yourself out of my rents, as they come in. If you should be in advance for the quarter, beyond what my rents will satisfy, then you will charge interest for such advance. On the contrary, if it should happen, that you have rents of mine in your possession, beyond what is required for the payment of the annuity, I ask no interest for the surplus money in your hands." With what justice, Sir, can it be said, that an agent, under such circumstances can be out of pocket? He may occasionally be in advance; but in that case he will be indemnified by receiving interest for his advance; while, on the contrary, he has the free use, without payment of interest, of any balance which may be at any time in his hands, beyond the amount of the fixed demand. Surely an agent thus circumstanced would have an advantageous agency; and is not the agency for the public, in the case which I have used this illustration to explain, a most advantageous agency for the Bank of England? The fact is, that in making this advance, the Bank of England are the bankers of the government, and the government deals with the Bank, just as the nobleman or gentleman would do with his agent, in the case which I have supposed.

The case will be still clearer if we examine how this arrangement between the Bank of England and the government works. On the 5th of January 1824, the sum advanced by the Bank for the public service amounted to 1,540,000*l.* —all of which was cleared off in the course of the next quarter. On the 5th of April following, there was an advance to government of 169,000*l.* This, Sir, was liquidated, in the course of a few weeks; namely, on the 28th of May: and, from the 28th of May to the 5th of July, the Bank remained in possession of a certain portion of the public revenue, with which it was at liberty to deal, in the way most conducive to its own benefit, without being called on for the payment of interest. On the 5th of July following, the advance on the part of the Bank amounted to 1,600,000*l.* This was cleared off on the 3rd of Sept. and, from that period, to the 10th of October, the Bank held a portion of the revenues of the government in its hands. On the 10th of October, the advance made by the Bank amounted to 1,400,000*l.* which was cleared off by the 10th of December: the Bank of England was again a gainer by the use of that portion of the public revenue which accrued between that day and the 5th of January.

On the 5th of January, in the present year, the advance made by the Bank for the public services—as has been truly stated by the hon. member for Taunton—amounted to 5,500,000*l.* But, Sir, on the day on which I am speaking, 2,700,000*l.* of that sum has been liquidated; and the remainder is in the progress of daily reduction [hear, hear].

Is this, Sir, a proceeding, that is likely to fetter the operations of the Bank? I deny that it is. I maintain, that it is an aid, instead of an impediment; and that, if the government, for any good reason, were to withdraw its business from the Bank, and place it elsewhere, the Bank so far from being relieved from a burden, would be deprived of a great and legitimate source of profit.

I am surprised, Sir, that it should have escaped the recollection of gentlemen, that in the report of the Bullion-committee of 1811, and again in the report of 1819, there is a distinct recommendation, that every statement of the advances made to the government, by the Bank, should be accompanied with an account of the balances of the public money which the government are in the habit of leaving in the hands of the Bank.

And what, Sir, is the average of those balances? The average of the balances left in the hands of the Bank by government—which balances the Bank is authorized to use for its own profit—amounts to no less a sum than 7,000,000*l.* So here, again, is an aid afforded to the Bank by the government, instead of an impediment thrown in its way, as stated by the hon. member for Taunton [hear, hear!].

Thus, Sir, I have explained away, item by item, this 24,500,000*l.*, which the hon. member described as cramping and clogging the energies of the Bank, until nothing of the burden said to have been thrown on its shoulders remains, except, the six or seven millions of Exchequer bills, which the Bank now holds. I am sure the hon. member does not mean to say — indeed he cannot mean to say—that this last is an objectionable item. The original charter of the Bank recognizes it. It is the

foundation of the whole superstructure. And, when the balance between the government and the Bank of England shall be struck, it must not be left out of the account, that the Bank are dividing 8 per cent upon a capital of 14,000,000*l.* instead of 7 per cent upon its original capital of 11,000,000*l.* The hon. member must be aware at what time, and under what circumstances, this change has been effected—that it has been accruing from a series of bonuses, divided amongst the Bank proprietors, in the years during which cash payments were suspended. And, Sir, it was with a reference to this fact, that, in one of my speeches, which I made in this House on the report of the Bullion-committee, I threw out, not a theoretical, but a practical proposition; namely, that during the continuance of the restriction of cash payments, the Bank should not be allowed to increase their dividends.

I think, then, there is nothing in the present state of the Bank of England, which justifies the complaints made by the hon. member for Taunton. Sorry should I have been, if the hon. member had made out his proposition, even to the extent of this last item; for if, as I gathered from one part of the hon. member's speech, he looks forward to some plan not yet divulged, for affording temporary relief, the Bank of England is the main instrument, by means of which any such plan can be carried into effect. It would be the greatest misfortune for the country, to induce a belief, that this mighty establishment is not competent to wield the great powers which are intrusted to it. So far as the government is concerned, I maintain, that the Bank has never been more disencumbered than it is at the present moment.

If, then, there is no difficulty, as between the Bank of England and the government, in carrying into effect the proposition of my right hon. friend, what are the difficulties, militating against that proposition, which exists with regard to the country banks?

It is admitted, Sir, that we have only an approximation to the amount of country bank-notes in circulation. No certain estimate can be made. But, it appears, from a comparison of the different calculations, that we should compute the amount rather too high, if we took it at 6,000,000*l.*; and, rather too low, if we took it at 4,000,000*l.* What will be the effect of my right hon. friend's proposition? Why that this amount—be it 6,000,000*l.* or be it 4,000,000*l.*—will be paid off in the course of three years, that is to say, will be withdrawn from circulation. There are about 800 country banks. That number has, perhaps, been reduced, by the late unfortunate events to about 700. If we divide between that number of country banks the amount, say six million, of one and two pound notes in circulation, it will give a proportion of somewhat above 8,000*l.* to each bank. That would be about the sum which each country bank would, on the average, have to call in, and for this process it is proposed by my right hon. friend to allow a period of three years. In other words, time is to be given, to enable the country bankers to withdraw somewhat more than 2,000*l.* and somewhat less than 3,000*l.* per annum, from their small note circulation. After all that we have heard—and after all that I am quite ready to admit, with regard to the solidity and respectability of the country banks—surely, Sir, it will not be contended, that such an effort will so strain their capacities, as to bring ruin and confusion upon the country [hear, hear!]. Quite sure I am, Sir, that the proposition of my right hon. friend, however it may have been exaggerated in apprehension, is one, which, when reduced to its proper dimensions, and gauged by the rules of arithmetic, will shrink into so small a compass, that no feeling will remain, but that of surprise and astonishment, that it could ever have been swelled to such apparent magnitude and importance [hear, hear!].

Now, Sir, while I deny that the effort is one which the country cannot easily bear, and while I observe that some hon. gentlemen treat the proposition as one of too narrow and confined a nature to produce any considerable effect, I think it necessary to remind the House, that however diminutive the immediate object may appear, it is great and mighty in principle [hear, hear!]. It is, I repeat, great and mighty in principle—if the effect of the gradual diminution of the paper circulation of those different establishments, shall be to restore, in the opinions and minds of men, the fixed and unerring principle of a metallic standard, for the currency of the country. If, Sir, it shall produce such an effect, the present effort, trivial and puny as it may appear in itself, will have achieved a great good, and conquered a growing evil—an evil which, if

not stopped in time, will go on increasing, until it becomes incalculable and insurmountable [hear, hear!].

Sir; we have all seen something of the growth and progress of the one-pound note system. I have already quoted Mr. Burke's account of the state of our currency, as it stood before the breaking out of the French Revolution. I came, Sir, into parliament, two years before that great man retired from public life. I had the good fortune to enjoy, during the short remainder of his natural life, a small portion of his private friendship. A letter—the only letter which I ever received from him—and which I have treasured up as a memorial of departed genius, was on this very subject. It was written at Bath, on that bed of sickness from which he never afterwards rose. After discussing the arguments for and against the measure of the Bank restriction, the letter concluded with this remarkable sentence—"Tell Mr. Pitt, that if he consents to the issue of one-pound notes, he will never see a guinea again" [hear, hear!]. Mr. Burke, like most prophets, was not believed at the time of uttering his predictions. One-pound notes were issued in abundance; they expelled, as had been foretold, guineas from circulation, and at length, as the hon. member for Taunton and myself must well remember, in the debates on the Bullion question, in 1811, it was found necessary to hedge the one-pound note with a divinity, which was never before supposed to belong to it, by the famous resolution of this House, which equalizes it with sterling gold. In the division of that day, the hon. member and myself opposed that resolution—to which my noble friend was the god-father, but not the father [a laugh, and cries of "Name!"]. No, Sir, I will not gratify gentlemen's curiosity by naming the father, but I can assure them Mr. Vansittart was not the father of the bantling, though he took upon himself to answer for its sins.

Seriously, Sir, the existence of that resolution forms a very good reason for acceding to the proposition of my right hon. friend. This, Sir, I am satisfied must be evident to every thinking man; and the fact becomes more evident, from something which passed in this House, in the course of last year. An obscure notion was prevalent throughout the country, that the one-pound country bank note was not necessarily convertible into gold, on demand. This appeared from a petition, presented by the hon. member for Montrose, in which it was stated, that a respectable banker had refused to give cash for a one-pound note—grounding his refusal upon the mistaken assumption, that, by law, he was not obliged to do so.

Now, Sir, when such a mistake could have been made by a man of business, an educated man, is it not a strong reason for our coming to a resolution, by which the possibility of such a mistake being made in future may be avoided?

The hon. member for Callington (Mr. Attwood) has said, that, in passing the present resolution, his majesty's ministers are about to do more mischief than they had imagination to conceive. The hon. member must be a very inattentive observer, if he has failed to discover, in the mistake which I have just noticed—a germ of mischief which it becomes the bounden duty of government to smother, before it shall arrive at a fatal maturity. The hon. member has also asked, whether his majesty's ministers have, or have not, repented of the declaration which they, at that time, made, relative to another suspension of cash payments. The hon. member seems to think, that a period may arrive, nay, that there has been a period, at which that resolution was on the point of giving way. For myself, I will say, that I do not contemplate the possibility of such a thing; and, if any one asks whether our resolution has at any time been shaken—for myself and my colleagues, I unhesitatingly answer—No; not for one moment [hear, hear!]. The hon. member has said, that this is all vapouring—that the time may come, when hard necessity will compel us to depart from our determination. The hon. member is mistaken. Sir, what we said—and what I now repeat—and what, under any circumstances we shall be found not to deviate from—was this—that we will not again fix on the Bank a coercive measure, to prevent them from paying in specie [hear, hear!]. A time may possibly arrive—though for my own part I have no more idea of the arrival of such a state of things than I have of a general convulsion of nature—a time, I say, may possibly arrive, when events may impose upon the Bank the necessity of a voluntary restriction: but this I will say—that no lapse of time—no change of events, will induce us to ward off that evil by consenting to interpose the powers of the

government, to put a stop to the regular circulation of the country, and to substitute for it a forced paper currency, not convertible into gold, on demand [hear, hear!].

If then, Sir, I have shewn, that there is no practical difficulty in removing so much of our paper circulation as is contemplated by the present resolution—and if, on the other hand, it would appear that a positive benefit would be derived from doing so—I would ask of those who oppose the measure, to point out what good can be derived from the continuance of the issue of such paper? I would even ask them, whether its continuance is so perfectly harmless as to call for no interposition? Is there nothing, Sir, independent of the swelling of prices, and the raising the value of commodities—is there, I would ask, no practical reason, which comes home to every breast, to call for an alteration in the system. Are there no opinions in the country in favour of those who support this proposition? Is there no district in the empire, into which these small notes are not permitted to enter—no province in which the use of them is entirely unknown? Do not gentlemen know, that a project for the issue of one-pound notes was unsuccessfully tried, some time ago, at Manchester? It is sufficient for me only to mention the names of Lloyd and Heywood—to which I could, if necessary, add others of equal weight and respectability—to convince every one who hears me, that the objection to the enterprise could not have had its foundation in any distrust of its authors. Nevertheless, Sir, as soon as an attempt was made to carry the speculation into effect, a public meeting was held at Manchester, at which the Boroughreeve presided; and, so loud and so general was the disapprobation of the projected measure—so violent was the hostility to the introduction of an element, without which some gentlemen seem to suppose the ordinary business of the country cannot go on—that, the enterprise was, of necessity, abandoned [hear, hear!].

Are gentlemen aware, Sir, that a circle drawn round the great trading town where the above resolution was come to, would embrace a population of about two millions of souls; and that a similar circle drawn round the metropolis, would include an equal population, amongst whom the circulation of small notes is unknown? And, do they reflect, that here are four millions of Englishmen, who know not practically what a one-pound note is? And yet, Sir, we are gravely told that without this species of circulating medium, not only is prosperity unattainable, but the very fabric of society is in danger of being dissolved [hear, hear!].

But, Sir, is there no other incentive to the adoption of the measure now proposed by my right hon. friend? Is it not known, that, not many weeks back, in consequence of the failure of the banks, a deputation waited upon his majesty's government, from the neighbourhood of one of the dock yards, and represented that they had not the means of paying the workmen their wages? All the banks in the neighbourhood had failed; and, such was the state of things, that not a bank note was to be procured. Is a state of things like this to be suffered to continue? Is it not a mischief, the possible recurrence of which, it is the duty of government to prevent? I trust that nearly all that was frail and feeble amongst the country banks is already gone. But though I am persuaded that the confidence which I place in such of them as have stood the shock is not ill-founded, does not the example of the past render it incumbent on us now that the opportunity is afforded us, to fix on a more solid basis, the circulation of the country?

But, Sir, it is vain to think of introducing gold, amidst the overwhelming spread of small paper circulation. So long, Sir, as that circulation shall continue, so long will the gold, of necessity, disappear. The small paper chokes up all the ordinary channels of circulation, so that the gold, though issued from the Bank, cannot flow into them, but is returned back to the source from which it came. We are accused of wishing to confine the circulation to the precious metals; but, in this respect, our views have been greatly misunderstood. Gold may be adopted as a medium of circulation, without trenching upon the use of the paper currency of a higher designation, or coming into collision with that article which furnishes the means of so large a proportion of mercantile dealings; namely, bills of exchange. Such paper you may pile mountains high, and those mountains will stand, provided their basis be irrigated with gold [hear, hear!].

But some hon. gentlemen have expressed their surprise, that the same indivi-

duals who have raised such an outcry against the smaller species of bank notes, should declare themselves in favour of notes of a higher denomination. Now, Sir, the only surprise is, that there should have been any surprise at all [a laugh]. Sir, the one-pound note possesses qualities which the larger notes do not. The larger notes, indeed, like the smaller, are so many promises to pay the equivalent in metal: but it is in the one-pound notes, that these promises are daily put to the test. When the labourer, or mechanic, presents a one-pound note, and finds that, instead of gold, nothing is to be had in exchange for it, but another piece of paper like itself—what is the consequence? A want of confidence grows up amongst the lower orders—through whom—and from them to their superiors—that want of confidence spreads with increased rapidity—involving in it the destruction of commercial credit, and depriving thereby the working classes of the present means of subsistence.

In the one-pound note there is this marked difference from the larger paper—that it is the representative of the sovereign—the express "image and superscription of Cæsar." The king coins not bills of exchange, nor large notes, but sovereigns. The inability to get a sovereign for that which professes exactly to represent it, and to be equivalent to it, is a more sensible disappointment and breach of faith than an exchange of paper for paper; and it is a disappointment and breach of faith which falls directly on the poor. The coiner of the one-pound note, if he does not exercise the prerogative of the Crown, fabricates a manufacture which takes the place of the king's coin. The resolution of my right hon. friend, should it receive the sanction of the House, will go to correct this evil. I am convinced, that the legislature cannot do an equal quantity of good, in any other way, with so little sacrifice, and with so slight an effort.

It is impossible, Sir, to have attended to the course of the present discussion, without discovering, that the opponents of the measure are divided into two classes. One class—and that, I am afraid, by far the larger of the two—while they openly profess to have no other object but to procure delay, and to have the measure postponed to a fitter time, really mean quite another thing; and are desirous to choke—to use a word which has been more than once employed in the course of the debate—the measure altogether; this professed object of gaining time is neither more nor less than a cover for a rooted, fundamental, unsparing, and unextinguishable objection to the circulation of any other currency, than that which prevailed during the war.

There are others—and these constitute the second class—who really seem to think, that to gain time is itself an object of importance; and, at the head of this class, is the able and enlightened member for Taunton; who, however unaccountable his present views may appear, is imbued with as just and correct a general notion of what sound circulating medium should be, as any of the supporters of my right hon. friend's proposition. Some of this class are of opinion, that there is something peculiarly unfavourable in the time that has been chosen for carrying my right hon. friend's proposition into effect. Now, Sir, I contend, that the present time is the very best that could be fixed upon. If any of those who object to the present time mean to say, that the thing should have been done long ago, I agree with them. But, in justice to his majesty's government, I must be permitted to say, that in 1822 they were foiled in a similar attempt. Had not the bill then brought in to extend the circulation of small notes for two years been altered in this House, and the period of ten years substituted for their original design, for that of two, I believe that England would now have been in the state of prosperity from which she has momentarily fallen; and I am convinced we should not, at this moment, have had imposed upon us the necessity of devising means for the preventing the recurrence of calamities similar to those which we now experience.

Let the past be a lesson to us for the future, and having once erred so fatally by postponement, and feeling as we do the ill effects of it, let us seize the present time as the most appropriate for an effort to restore the circulating medium to its proper, sound, and healthy condition.

As to those who, under the mask of delay, are fondly looking to a perpetual, unlimited, unregulated circulation of paper, I beg them to recollect how the law, with respect to the currency, at present stands. The existing law will, at the furthest, put their favourite one-pound notes to death, in the year 1833. That is

the remotest period to which their existence can be protracted, under the provisions already made by parliament. That extinction, let gentlemen remember, will be coincident with the expiration of the charter of the Bank of England. Will any gentleman tell me, that that would be a convenient time for the withdrawing at once of these small notes; or, if not, for again discussing and disposing of a question of such vital importance? I presume that no one will assert, that it would be particularly convenient to make the expiration of the Bank charter, and the withdrawal of the one-pound notes contemporaneous. I take for granted that the stoutest advocate for delay is not prepared, at least at the present moment, to extend the circulation of the small paper of the country bankers to a later period than that to which the Bank charter is limited—that, indeed, would be to meet the question boldly, and to call for a circulation of perpetual paper unadulterated with gold.

All that is proposed by my right hon. friend is, to get rid of this system four years sooner than was contemplated by the act of 1822, as it passed this House, but not by the bill as brought in by the government. The abundant space of three years is still to be allowed, for carrying into effect the alteration: not one of the many gentlemen who wish for a little more delay—only a little more delay—in passing the measure, have attempted to assign any reason for the precise period of further delay which he has required. The hon. member for Taunton thinks that one year of grace would be necessary; while, on the other hand, another hon. member is of opinion, that even a month's delay would be sufficient.

Sir, I confess I object alike to both these suggestions, and cannot approve of any delay, because I am convinced that—no matter what the assurances, or pledges, or explanations may be, with which it is accompanied—out of doors delay will be considered as a defeat of the proposition of my right hon. friend. Such, assuredly, will be the construction put upon it, by that party in the country, whose interests induce them to look to the indefinite prolongation of the circulation of the one and two pound notes.

But, Sir, supposing the advocates of delay to deny my conclusion, supposing those hon. gentlemen to be, really and bonâ fide, sticklers for time, merely to gain an opportunity for preparation, on the part of the country bankers—will they, or will any one of them, undertake to answer, that the interval given them with a view to preparation will be so used? On the contrary, Sir, may it not, I ask, if granted, be employed, not in such preparation, but in taking steps to prevent the possibility of a recurrence to cash payments?

The hon. baronet* opposite seems, by his manner, to admit the justice of my suspicion. And, indeed, he has too open and ingenuous a countenance to indicate any thing except what is really passing in his mind. I am almost tempted to ask my hon. friend, whether he has not heard of schemes in preparation for the defeat of this measure, which would, if put into execution, render it idle to resume the discussion of this question in a year, aye, or a month from the time at which we are now speaking.

Let us see, Sir, what encouragement we have to concur in the line of conduct recommended by the advocates for delay. For years and years his majesty's ministers have been assailed with representations, urging the propriety of throwing open our commercial system. We were called on, session after session, by enlightened members on the other side of the House, to make our trade free as the air, to enlarge it by opening it to all the winds of heaven, to extend it to the very ends of the earth. This, Sir, we were called upon to do; and, I am willing to admit, in perfect rectitude of intention, by men generally holding political opinions different from our own.

Sir, we have attempted to free the trade of the country from those restrictions which cramped and encumbered it; and to establish an enlarged system of commercial policy, more consonant with the spirit of the age, and with the demands of our situation. In adopting the regulations necessary for the carrying such a system into effect, we found, that if there was any one branch of our trade which, more than another, called for revision, it was the silk manufacture of this country: and, acting upon this conviction, and aided by the honest, honourable, and effectual assistance of those who had previously, from time to time, preached

* Sir J. Wrottesley.

similar doctrine, we succeeded in carrying their opinions and our own into effect.

What was the course taken by the opponents of that measure. After the entire defeat of their opposition to it, what did they do? They asked for time, to enable those who were engaged in the silk trade to prepare for the altered system. Sir, the time was given. And how was that time employed? In preparing for the opening of the ports? In taking steps to adapt the silk trade to the state of things that was about to arise out of the new law? No such thing, but, in raising every possible obstacle to the operation of that law—in doing every thing that human ingenuity could devise, to make the new arrangement, which comes into effect in July next, impracticable. Has there been, Sir, any gradual alteration adopted in the mode of manufacturing and trading in that article, calculated to meet, and to give effect to, the proposed regulations? No. Was employment gradually reduced in extent, or the importation of the raw material lessened? Neither. The market has become glutted with a redundancy of manufactures, sufficient in itself to have occasioned the existing distress in that branch of our trade; and by the increased importation of the raw material (which, in the last year alone, was more than doubled) the distress has been still further increased. And, after all this, an outcry is now raised upon those very difficulties which have been thus wilfully and purposely contrived, and a fresh appeal is founded upon them for a still further prolongation of the restrictive system [hear, hear!].

Is this any encouragement to us to comply with the call for delay in the present instance? On the contrary, with such an example before our eyes, to grant a further delay would, in this case, be to fall twice into the same error; in fact, to stultify our own measure, and to render it impossible, when the time shall arrive, to carry it into effect.

I hope, Sir, it is entirely unnecessary for me, or for any member of his majesty's government, or for any member of an English parliament, at this time, to avow the sorrow and anxiety which every feeling man must experience, at the commercial and financial distress which prevails to so large an extent throughout the country. Indeed, I am bound to confess, that, much as I differ in opinion with several hon. gentlemen who have taken part in the present discussion, there has been, nearly on all hands, a prudent and generous avoidance of such topics and expressions, as might, if introduced into debate in this House, have been made use of out of doors, whether mistakenly or mischievously, to enhance the difficulties of parliament, to embarrass the ministers of the Crown, and to aggravate and inflame the national distress. The question has been fairly argued on its own merits, and with an honourable abstinence from every thing that could have had a tendency to create unnecessary irritation. It cannot be necessary for an assembly of Englishmen to declare, that they feel for the distresses of persons, with whom every individual of that assembly must, necessarily, be more or less intimately connected, or acquainted: and far less, to make a protestation of their sympathy with the privations and sufferings endured by the more humble, but not less valuable, class of our fellow subjects, upon whose labours, and upon whose comfort and happiness, the well-being of society depends. It is with regard to those humbler classes of the community that I think this measure, important as it is to all, of the most immediate importance.

I am not so absurd as to assert, that the proposed alteration of our currency will directly put an end to those commercial embarrassments, which have mainly arisen out of the unwholesome and preternatural extension of commercial speculation; but this, Sir, I do say distinctly, that I believe it will tend materially to prevent the recurrence of that distress, which, beginning with the higher, is sure to find its way, sooner or later, to the lower classes of society.

Sir, it was the wish of the most favourite monarch of France, that he might live to see the day when the condition of his subjects would be so far improved, that every peasant in his realm should have a fowl in his pot on a Sunday: and sure I am that if this resolution of my right hon. friend should be acceded to, it will at least do this much for the peasant and artisan of England—that it will ensure to every man at the end of his week's toil, that he shall carry home, as the earnings of his week's toil, not a piece of, perhaps, worthless paper, but a portion of the precious metals in his pocket [loud cheers].

Mr. *Pearse* defended the conduct of the Bank of England, and complained

that justice had not been done either to the motives or interests of that establishment. The public had been taught, as it seemed to him, to form a very erroneous estimate of the profits of the Bank; which had been by no means so large as some hon. members had insinuated. Allusion had been made to the subject of the dead weight, and to the loans upon mortgage. The fact was, that public establishments could not always act as they pleased. Both those undertakings had been reluctant measures on the part of the Bank. For the first, when it was found that the plan could not be carried into effect without their assistance, sanctioned as it was by parliament, they were anxious to give their aid towards putting it in execution, if possible. Then it was said, that the Bank might have disposed of a part of this incumbrance; but so, let it be recollected, might the government have funded part of their Exchequer bills, and they had not done so. If there was any fault, one side had as much of it to answer for as the other. Large balances of the public money, it was said, had lain in their hands, and by these they had profited largely; but, it was not remembered that they had also lent the public a large sum for eight or ten years, without interest. Of the profits which the Bank was charged to have made during the war, he could undertake to show, that the greater portion had reverted to the public. The charter held by the Bank too had been held up as an exceeding grievance. All he would say was, that if the terms of that charter were to be materially changed, he should think it a very unfortunate thing for the country. All he wanted from the charter was, that it should secure the Bank from having a rival establishment set up in London. He would explain why. If there were two rival Banks in London, the contest would immediately be, which should get the greatest quantity of paper out. Responsibility would be quite out of the question. Let the House regulate the privileges of the Bank by its charter as they would; but let them guard against having a competition between two establishments in London. He would now notice the extraordinary change which had lately occurred in the circumstances of the country. He felt quite certain, that neither the circulation of country bank notes, nor the issues of the Bank of England, had in any degree worth mentioning contributed to it. England was a country in which every thing like mercantile speculation was sure to be pushed to the utmost. Only open a new field for effort of any description, and the effort was sure to be made. The fact was, that it was by bills of exchange, and not by any country notes or bank issues, that the enormous capital used during the late speculations had been provided. He believed he could address himself to one banker who was a member of that House, and who, at one time, held in his possession from three to four millions' worth of merchants acceptances, which he had discounted. That which had been called abundance and surplus of capital, had, in fact, been abundance and surplus of paper; not country or London Bank notes, but bills of exchange—some good, some indifferent, and some very bad indeed. This had given rise to overtrading, and that had essentially produced all our difficulties. When one banking-house in London stopped, more than forty country banks suspended payment. Other banks followed: this produced a panic: the panic once commenced, confidence was gone; and as it was impossible to restore confidence, the country still remained in a state of dismay.

Mr. *Baring* said, it was not his intention to take up a great deal of the time of the House, nor would he, in fact, have troubled hon. members at all, but that he intended to propose an amendment, in order to bring the question at once to a decision; because he was quite convinced that discussion from day to day, whatever might be its result, would have the certain effect of aggravating the difficulties under which all interests at present were labouring. What the country wanted mainly was, that the question should be set at rest. Let the decision of parliament be taken and made known, and interests would endeavour to accommodate themselves to it; but, if the House was to go into a committee, and argue the subject at length, so long as that discussion lasted, the country would be kept upon the rack. Therefore, under such circumstances, he felt it his duty to take the sense of the House at once upon the proposed measure. He felt most strongly that it was an ill-advised measure, and would add to the distresses of the country, but that, whether carried or rejected, the sooner it was dismissed the better. What he meant to embody in his amendment, was an opinion, common, he believed, to

all the opponents of the proposed measure; namely, that the state of the country at the present moment was an unfit one for making experiments. As far as he was concerned, if the House supported ministers against him upon this division, he would consider the issue as decisive, and give no further opposition to the measure; which, if it was to pass, he desired should pass as speedily as possible. Before dividing, however, he thought it his duty to say a few words, and would in the first place desire to call the attention of the House to the very peculiar situation in which the country stood. No man who had known the country, however long, and its commercial affairs, had ever, he would venture to assert, beheld so entire an absence of confidence as existed at the present moment. For, though a very clever speech, like that of the right hon. foreign secretary, delivered in the House of Commons, might conciliate and give confidence to those who heard it; yet, to the country at large (who did not hear it) that confidence would not extend; and the practical necessity which many people would find, notwithstanding that speech, of paying up immediately all sums that were due from them, would tend greatly to interfere with their otherwise sense of the right hon. gentleman's flattering and conciliatory view. Let it be recollected that, in spite of all eloquent speeches, the House stood in this situation—the men of business in it, from one end to the other, told the right hon. gentleman to beware. He did not believe there was one banker or merchant in the House, on whatever side he might be accustomed to vote, who would venture to say, that he thought this measure could be carried without injury to the country. The hon. member for Midhurst (Mr. John Smith) was the only individual who had come near the mark; and he had gone no further than to say that, upon the whole, he should be inclined to vote for the measure. On the other side of the House there was great strength in the way of talent—great reinforcements from the Temple, and from Lincoln's-inn—great force of those who studied from books, and held practical men in contempt—but no other man of business had supported the measure but the hon. member for Midhurst; and all he had said was, that, upon the whole, he should be inclined to vote for the measure. And, moreover, with all the brilliant eloquence of the right hon. secretary, who was a great orator, a profound statesman, and possessed a hundred other qualities calculated to persuade and to attract admiration, that right hon. gentleman would not feel offended if he said that, upon a point like the present, he would prefer taking the opinion of the right hon. gentleman on his right hand, the president of the Board of Trade. The right hon. secretary seemed to him to stand pretty much in the situation in which lord Chesterfield expressed himself once to have been placed. "Some plain man," said his lordship, "from a corner, made a long heavy discourse upon the matter, which he understood very well; but he mumbled and stammered so that nobody cared to listen to him. I then got up, and without knowing any thing of the subject at all, made a most brilliant and dashing speech upon it, and, on concluding carried every thing before me." Let the House, however, resist the effect of this kind of fascination, as far as they could do so, and look at the question coolly. What he said was—do not lose sight of what should be done eventually; do not forget what it will be wise to bring our currency to; but first soothe the country and quiet it, and then come, if you will, with your experiments, which, however ingenuous they may be, must, if passed at the present moment, be brought about at the expense of very considerable suffering. The chief difference, in fact, between him and the hon. gentlemen opposite was, as to the question of time; and upon that question, he did think the men of business in the House were better qualified to judge than the abstract reasoners. The one-pound notes, which there was this hasty anxiety to get rid of, had a great deal laid upon them for which they were no way bound to answer. The country bank notes were charged as having caused, or aided, the late unreasonable and visionary speculations. Why, the fact was, that the bubbles, every one of them, were town made. It was the country booby, who was the dupe of the London sharper. London, Manchester, Liverpool—these were the spots in which the vile schemes for speculation had been invented—places in which no country one-pound bank notes at all existed. If the notes had nothing but the speculations to answer for, he would venture to say that they stood entirely clear. In the same way, with reference to what had been said of the offence against the pre-

rogative of the Crown, upon what principle it could be shown that making a one-pound note was a greater offence against the prerogative than making a five-pound note, he was entirely at a loss to imagine. But, he neither defended nor supported these notes upon principle. He agreed that they were a nuisance, and a nuisance which ought to be abated: and, if no other argument could be adduced against them than the danger to which they exposed the working classes, that argument alone, he should hold, was quite sufficient. Besides, he agreed that, by taking away the notes, it would be possible so to saturate the country with gold and silver, that we needed not to mind the loss of any quantity which would be carried away by such an accident as the fluctuation in the exchange. The only question between him and other gentlemen, was that of time. Some of them put the case as if the present instant were all that was to be considered. It had been argued, that now was the time or never. The argument seemed to treat them like children. If the country bank small note circulation was inimical to the welfare of the country, who could doubt but that, when the proper period should arrive, the House would do that which would become its dignity and functions? What need, then, of this precipitancy? The case was put always as if the paper circulation had grown up in opposition to the connivance and contrivance of the Bank and the government. It was the parliament who had raised up the paper circulation. He complained of the great fondness that was entertained by some gentlemen for their particular views; who, when once they got the patient within their power, a theory having opened to them previously, proceeded with their operation; the agony and suffering of that patient causing no remorse or abatement in the rigour of their practice.—If any practical man in that House could show how the step could be taken without danger, he would freely give up his judgment to the philosophers and theorists; but until then, he thought the right hon. gentlemen opposite were taking a great responsibility upon themselves. Adverting to the conduct of the president of the Board of Trade, the hon. gentleman said, that two years ago, he had expressed the opinion which he now held, that in the manufacture of silk the English manufacturer could not compete with the manufacturer of France and Switzerland. Suppose now, that the government, and those who sided with them, should finally discover themselves to have mistaken the subject. Was not one mistake enough for one period? A great deal was expected from the measure of taking off the restrictions on the importation of foreign silk. He was convinced that those who entertained such expectations would be deceived. But why, in the same year, do something else which must aggravate the distress which was now felt in almost every country town in the kingdom? The right hon. the president of the Board of Trade could not possibly be aware of the real state of the country. He could not —it was plain from his declarations, that he did not— understand the cares and anxieties which beset thousands as to their ability to pay according to their undertakings. But, suppose they should be right in one of those measures, why should they persist in making this great experiment on 300,000 or 400,000 manufacturers, who would, in all probability, be turned out of the means of existence? Why not be content with one difficulty at a time? To say the least, either of those measures was a novelty. If they resolved to try this novelty in regulating the currency, why choose that very time for trying the experiment of a competition with France in an open trade in silks? Suppose they should afterwards see their mistake. Ruin would fall on millions, while, at the same moment, the country would be labouring under the accumulated distress which must be incidental to the withdrawing of a considerable portion of the currency. Trade, already in a state of great confusion, would be still more confused. And, by the middle of the year, they might witness such scenes as were acted throughout the country in 1819. The blacking-man would go round the districts, aided by crowds of itinerant patriots. The stomachs of the unhappy people being empty, their credulous ears would be open to suggestions of sedition and discontent. He pronounced this policy to be the most foolish risk ever incurred by any administration. Now for a few words on a very important part of the case. When this discussion opened, he had stated the awkward and ill-managed contrivances of government in resorting to the Bank of England for aid, when they might have raised money far more easily and economically; the 3 per cents, being at that very period at 95. He had stated,

that at the end of the American war, the Bank had all but stopped payment: in 1797 it did aotually stop payment. In both these cases the causes assigned for the pressure on the Bank, both by the Bank and the public, were the aids given by the Bank to the government. On these occasions, the Bank having made a forced abundance, and promoted speculations in schemes by that abundance, next resorted to a contraction of their issues, which produced the calamities ascribed to these unfortunate country bankers notes. They had, to use the language of the right hon. foreign secretary, raised the balloon to the skies, and had then put a pin through it and sent it to the earth. The right hon. gentleman had found fault with the statement which he had made of the Bank having 24,500,000*l.* locked up by government, as being uncandid and unfair. How did the case stand, according to the admissions of the right hon. secretary? The amount of Exchequer bills he did not attempt to overset. As to the dead weight, which he had taken at 8,000,000*l.* the right hon. gentleman took it at 5,500,000*l.* The dead weight actually paid in July, 1805, was 6,917,000*l.*; the dead weight paid in January of the present year was 1,100,000*l.* The right hon. gentleman deducted the advances made by the government towards the current payments, but did not seem to take into the account, that these advances were, in fact already disbursed by the Bank; though it might be very true that, upon a scale of four years during which the annuity continued, they would be refunded with sufficient advantage to the Bank. But how did this disprove, that the Bank had already 8,000,000*l.* of their present capital locked up in the dead weight? With respect to the payment by the Bank of the dissentients on the reduction of the 4 per cents he had taken it at 2,000,000*l.* The right hon. gentleman had taken it at nearly 4,000,000*l.* so that here he had been mistaken, and had calulated it at too little by 1,500,000*l.* As to the deficiencies, they were, it was true, received again and again, and perhaps most frequently within the quarter. What he had said was, that at a period of great difficulty, the Bank was in advance with those deficiencies: so that altogether it had locked up, by the wants of government, no less than 24,500,000*l.* It was true that government had cash at the Bank usually to the amount of 6,000,000*l.* but that money was continually subject to be recalled, and appropriated by the vote of parliament. He begged the House to recollect that his comparison had been drawn between the present period and 1797; at the former, the government had 24,500,000*l.* of the capital of the Bank engaged in its transactions; in 1797, the Bank had only 10,000,000*l.* locked up by the wants of government, and then the Bank was obliged to stop payment.—Upon the whole, he saw no reason, for dread or apprehension, now, under a wise and discreet management. He differed from those of his hon. friends who thought that the country could not go on under its present burthens. He did not wish to urge his own sentiments beyond an amicable difference of opinion; but he thought that with care and management in the State, with a rigid economy enforced in every department of government, and a disposition on the part of the people to bear something more than the mere burthen of providing an income, all might yet go well. It had been said, that though the Bank had so largely accommodated government, yet that there could be no embarrassment, because it held government securities and Exchequer-bills to an equal amount. The hon. member himself could make these securities available. But the Bank could not. In a time of difficulty the Bank could not raise 5*l.* upon these securities. He was convinced, when he heard that the Bank was disposing of Exchequer-bills, that it would lead to considerable embarrassment, and the result had shown, that the derangements of the money-market were aggravated by the Bank just at the time of selling Exchequer-bills. Referring to the resolution of the House in 1816 that a one-pound note and a shilling were equivalent to a guinea in gold, the hon. gentleman said, he was sorry that the author of that celebrated production, "that great unknown," who had favoured the parliament and the country by so luminous an entry on their journals, was not here to enjoy his just triumph. He believed it was lord Bexley who had made that important disclosure. At any rate, if lord Bexley was not the father, he was the godfather of that sapient declaration, and had notoriously introduced it to the House, in a long speech of his own. As to the immediate question, he would say, leave the thing alone for the present. Whatever number of country-bank notes had been out they were now considerably diminished; and the state

of the country rendered any precipitate contraction of the remainder higly inexpedient. He would therefore move, by way of amendment, "That, it is the opinion of this House, that in the present disturbed state of public and private credit, it is not expedient to enter upon the consideration of the Banking system of the country."

Mr. *Grenfell* said, he could not tell whether his hon. friend would consider him a practical man. However, be that as it might, he would give it as his deliberate opinion, that not only might this measure be with safety adopted, but that in his conscience he believed there would be no safety for the circulation of the country without it. Further, he would say, that, in all his communications with practical men, he had not found one who did not declare that the cause of the pressure originated in the country-bank notes, and that one of the remedies was their removal.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he could not, on a question of such importance, content himself with a silent vote. Whatever opinion his hon. friend might hold of his being a practical man, he would endeavour to state, as shortly and as practically as he could, the reasons why he differed from him, on the only ground respecting which there could be any difference of opinion. His hon. friend, practically speaking, was of opinion, that a recurrence to a metallic currency was necessary to the support of our commerce; and that, without getting rid of the small notes, it would be utterly impossible to arrive at the desired result. Thus far they were agreed; and the only question between them was as to time. Now, a few words on that point only. His first reason for dissenting from his hon. friend as to time was one as purely practical, and as little visionary or theoretic as could well be imagined. His first reason for the immediate adoption of the measure, as contradistinguished from a postponement, was, that the plan was already partly in execution. His first practical reason was, the consequence of the over-trading and panic by which the mischiefs had been aggravated. The small notes did not cause the over-trading, or originate the mischief; but, when the mischief had arisen, it was then very materially aggravated by the small notes in circulation. Runs were accordingly made: and it could not be denied, that when fear seized the minds of the holders of notes, the persons rushing in were not the holders of large notes, but those persons who had saved up small sums of money. In this way the public calamity was increased. The consequence was to diminish the confidence in the banks; then to produce failures, and then to displace the small notes; which displacing of the small notes was as completely accomplished as by the full execution of this measure. The mischief had been felt; and the question was, shall we go back, or take such measures as may guard against a recurrence of the evil?—His other reason for differing from his hon. friend was this.—Did any man entertain a shadow of a doubt, that if this measure was not accomplished now, it never would be? His hon. friend would not say when. He had hinted something about a year; but this measure gave more time than even that hinted at by his hon. friend. His third and last reason for differing from his hon. friend and others, was this, that although they foretold evil as likely to result from the measure, they did not condescend to show how. Was it by increasing the indisposition of the banks to make issues? There was a great distrust of narrowing issues, and refusing discounts; the reason of which was, that the customers were not deemed so trustworthy; but, if any man of good credit were to go to a country banker, he would not say he would receive as much accommodation as before, but he was satisfied he would receive as much credit as he ought to receive at any time. If they should come—unfortunately, he must say—to a resolution, that the old notes were to be allowed to wear themselves out without taking proper and efficient measures to prevent the re-issue of the stamps, the consequence would be, that they would be renewed, and at the end of two or three years, they would find themselves just where they set out. If they should abstain from touching these small notes at all, and listen to those who prayed for delay, why then, they might be assured, that the gold would be effectually kept out; and if, at the end of a year and a half, as one hon. gentleman seemed to think, or three years, as was held to be a sufficient time by another, or any other period, no matter what—they should flatter themselves with the idea of the small notes being given up, he would tell them that that time would never come. Nothing could, therefore, be gained by delay. There was a point of theirs, con-

nected with the question, to which he had been unwilling to give up his mind, but which had been forced upon him at length by experience of practice; namely, that a paper currency, convertible into gold, could not exist with gold. This was contrary to all theory upon the subject, and at variance with all the positions laid down by political economists; but it was a truth which he could no longer resist, that when there was a paper currency convertible at will into gold, and a gold currency at the same time, the gold would soon disappear from the circulation. If, therefore, they yielded to the present request for delay, when the time came which had been conceded to their request, if it proved to be a season of difficulty, they would say, "this is not the time, wait yet a little longer, till the present storm blows over; this is not the time for changes or innovation, do not interrupt the course of things by speculative theories till the present danger is passed." If it should happen to be a time of prosperity, why then they would be told to leave well alone; they would be reminded of that cordial virtue of their ancestors, the quiet contentment under all abuses; they would be told, that they might better themselves a little to be sure, but they might be much worse, and they should know when they were well off. In short, take it as they would, they would find, that no alteration could ever be brought about with their consent. There might, it was true, be some argument adduced against those who now wished to put an end to the system of small notes, if they were beginning to displace them at this moment, but the ground for that argument no longer existed. Few of the banks which would be affected had any paper of this description in circulation. He had already stated how, in his opinion, the theory upon the subject of the gold currency differed from the practice; for, that the gold disappeared when in co-existence with a paper convertible into gold, was a fact undeniable. Whether it was that the greater portion of small notes circulated among poor people, who were ignorant of the power they possessed to convert it into gold; or, whether they did not consider themselves free agents to require from those who uttered these notes, the amount of their bond—the fact was undeniable, that the gold did not get into circulation by means of these notes, and that, contrary to all theory, it did not retain its place in a circulation of mixed paper and precious metals. One hon. member had gone the length of maintaining, that no currency was more fitting and proper than one composed entirely of paper; for his part, he thought that no country could have a sound and wholesome circulating medium from a paper currency, deprived of gold and silver; because, these precious metals seemed to be naturally designed for such a purpose, from their intrinsic value.—The hon. member for Taunton, with whom he regretted upon the present occasion to differ, had recommended silver to be added to gold as a standard of value; although he had not exactly explained how that was to be accomplished. One word he would say about tampering with the currency. If ever the time should come (and God knew it pained him to make any allusion to such a subject), but, if ever the time should come, when, by tampering with the currency, it should come to be depressed, he hoped they would look their difficulties fairly in the face; he trusted they would meet them manfully and honestly, and bear without shrinking, and without artifice, the duty which might be imposed upon them. His reason for objecting to silver as a standard instead of gold was, that gold was less easily procured, and subject to no other loss than the wear and tear of its transition from one hand to another; whereas silver, from the mines of America, by the discoveries of modern mineralogists, and the improvements introduced in machinery, was much more likely to sustain great fluctuations in value, which would render it unfit to be a permanent or universal standard.—He had only one observation to make in conclusion; namely, that whatever might be the result of the bill which he hoped to see introduced—whether it might have the effect of remedying the evils which they had all seen to be the result of the system intended to be put an end to—or whether those evils continued, and even increased, after it had been called into operation; if those who now opposed it should hereafter, as he, without being endowed with the spirit of prophecy, could foretel they would—if, he repeated, they should, when the miseries of the times continued, or perhaps increased, call upon the advocates of the bill to look at the consequences of their work, and recal to their recollection the arguments and entreaties used to prevent

the passing of a measure which had produced such calamities; he would tell them, if any or all of those miseries happened, to recall to their recollection the month of December—that gloomy and fatal period—the most disastrous, and most horrible, perhaps, in their commercial annals. He would say, let them look back to that period, and if they pointed to the distress or the distrust which may hereafter exist, remind them of the last fourteen days, or three weeks, before the discussions in that House—let them call to their remembrance the bankruptcies, the universal want of confidence, the unparalleled misery which then existed in every part of the country—and then let them attribute that wretchedness to the measure now in contemplation, if they can do so with any shadow of reason. The only consolation they could offer to the sufferers—for sufferers there would be, not only from the state of the last few months, but from that diminished consumption of all the productions of other classes, inflicting the heaviest pressure upon that most honest, industrious, meritorious, and most numerous class of the community, the working class—all they could offer to them, in return for their patient endurance of evils, would be, not a vain pretence to remedy their afflictions, but a steady and invariable currency to buy and to sell—a currency which may save them a renewal of those disasters from which they have lately, in some districts, suffered miseries, compared with which the very lowest rate of wages that could be accorded was as nothing; inasmuch as the one was only a diminution of profit, while the other became a total and irretrievable loss, attended by calamities too melancholy to be dwelt on. Whatever difference of opinion might exist as to the principle of the measure which had been proposed, or however they might differ in the details, as he believed a state of suspense to be the very worst in which the country could be left, he, for one, would give a cordial vote for the immediate production of the bill.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, he agreed completely in the justice of the observation with which the learned gentleman had concluded his speech, and he believed that the sentiment was fully participated in by every member of the House. As the question, however, which was then before the House, namely, "that the Speaker do leave the chair," was merely a question of form, the decision of it might not appear to express the opinion of the House on the principle of the measure. But, after the protracted debate which had taken place, and as it was desirable, on every account, to have the opinion of the House ascertained with as little delay as possible, he thought the most expedient course would be, to have it understood, that the present question, although one merely of form, involved the consideration of the measure before them, and that the decision of one would be considered as a decision upon the other.

Upon this understanding the House divided; for Mr. Baring's amendment 39, against it 222. Majority 183.

List of the Minority.

Attwood, M.	Irving, J.
Bright, H.	Kemp, T. R.
Benett, J.	Martin, J.
Bridges, Ald.	Maberly, J.
Blair, James	Maberly, W. L.
Baring, sir T.	Palmer, Fyshe
Calcraft, J.	Plummer, J.
Calvert, N.	Robarts, A. W.
Farquhar, sir R.	Robarts, col.
Gurney, Hudson	Robertson, Alex.
Gordon, Rt.	Robinson, sir G.
Griffith, L. W.	Smith, S.
Graham, sir S.	Smith, Abel
Grosset, J. R.	Thompson, Ald.
Gascoyne, T.	Wilson, T.
Hume, J.	Whitbread, W. H.
Heygate, Ald.	Wood, Ald.
Heathcote, G.	Walker, J.
Honywood, W. P.	TELLERS.
Innes, J.	Baring, A.
Ingilby, sir W. A.	Wrottesley, sir J.

The original question was then agreed to, and the House resolved itself into the committee. On the Resolution being read,

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* observed, that, if government destroyed all the country bankers' notes, and, at the same time, stopped the issue of one-pound notes by the Bank of England, they would leave the country in a state of destitution, of which they could not have any adequate conception. That establishment was not liable to the imputations thrown out against the country banks, of being desirous to put out their small paper without rule or guide. He should therefore move, as an amendment, that the words "or by the Bank of England" be left out of the resolution.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that although much of the inconvenience that would result from permitting country bank notes still to circulate, would not attend the continued circulation of the

small notes of the Bank of England, because they were more immediately under the eyes and control of government, and of course their issues could be more easily restrained and regulated, still he could not agree to the amendment of the hon. member. He conceived that such an exception would be extremely unjust to the country bankers in general. Although the hon. gentleman might not entertain that opinion, yet he felt that it would be invidious and unjust to make the distinction. It would be a very fair distinction, without producing any adequate benefit [hear].

Mr. *Maberly* said, that he could not discover the expediency or consistency of suppressing the small notes in England, and allowing them to circulate in Scotland and Ireland. If the principle were good for one kingdom, it would be equally beneficial for the others. He had received letters from Scotland which represented that country as being placed in the utmost state of alarm and apprehension as to the course which government proposed to pursue. It was not so much that the people there were anxious for the carrying of any particular measure, as that they were solicitous to know what was to happen. "Let us," they cried, "only know what you intend to do, and we shall be satisfied."

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* agreed with the hon. member for Abingdon, as to the extent to which the principle should be carried; and as he perceived that the hon. gentleman had not been in the House on a former evening, when a noble lord had asked the same question, he would repeat, that it was his intention to carry the principle into full effect, both in Scotland and in Ireland, and that the only grounds for making any variation depended upon the question of time. It was his intention, however, in a very few days, to lay before the House his plan for the suppression of small notes, both in Scotland and other parts of the country.

Mr. *Baring* said, he considered that the object of the amendment, namely, to allow the small notes of the Bank of England to circulate, whilst those of the country banks were suppressed, would be utterly intolerable, on any sound principle.

Mr. *Hume* said, he did not rise to continue the discussion of the night, but merely to protest against the measure which had been just adopted. He thought that the House had acted prematurely, and had proceeded upon an error; and he hoped soon to have the opportunity of stating at more length, the grounds on which he entertained the conviction, that the causes of the present distress were unconnected with the small-note circulation. He hoped to be able to show, that they were, as fast as possible, retracing their steps, and giving up the principal point suggested by Mr. Ricardo, and acted upon in Mr. Peel's bill. He thought that they were doing wrong—he was sorry for it; but all he could he would do, to disabuse the House and the country.

Mr. *Peel* said, that the hon. gentleman had rather mis-stated the tendency of his bill, when he said it was founded on Mr. Ricardo's principle; whereas it was well known, that Mr. Ricardo's proposition was to pay Bank notes in ingots of gold. But, the principle of his bill was, to render notes of the smallest amount convertible into gold; and there was, in addition, a positive prohibition against the circulation of country bank notes after the lapse of two years from the passing of the bill; and if that bill had been carried into complete effect there would not now have been a country one-pound note in circulation.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, he felt the amendment which he had offered to be of so much importance, that he should persist in pressing it. He was firmly of opinion, that had it not been for the issues of the one-pound notes by the Bank of England at the time that they took place, the recent calamity would have been greatly aggravated. These issues had done the greatest good; and in the event of a similar emergency, he thought that means of similar assistance should be available to the exigencies of the country.

The House then divided—for the amendment 7; against it 66; majority, 59.

List of the Minority.

Attwood, Matthias	Thomson, Alderman.
Buxton, T. F.	Wodehouse, Edmond.
Gordon, hon. W.	TELLER.
Martin, John	Gurney, Hudson
Palmer, Fysche	

The original resolution was agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, February 14.

SILK TRADE.] Mr. *Ellice*, seeing the

President of the Board of Trade in his place, wished to take the opportunity of presenting a petition from the manufacturers engaged in the ribbon trade in Coventry, who employed upwards of 24,000 workmen; setting forth the apprehensions they entertained from the competition into which they would be forced with the French and Swiss trade in July next, on the admission of the foreign article. Whether the apprehensions of the manufacturers were well or ill founded, he would not now stop to inquire, although his belief was, that they were founded upon incontrovertible truths. In answer to the communications which had passed between this trade and the lords of the Treasury, the latter declared their dissent from the alarms of the former, and expressed their conviction, that no greater importation of foreign goods would legally take place from the operation of the new measure, than at present took place through the traffic of smugglers. The manufacturers, however, entertained very different feelings on the subject, and were fully impressed with the belief, that if the government persevered in their intentions, the trade must necessarily decay, and they would be under the necessity of discharging all their workmen. Now, the issue upon which he was prepared to put this question was simply this: either the petitioners were correct in their view, or they were not; and for the purpose of ascertaining that point, he intended to move for the appointment of a committee, where alone the proper light could be thrown upon the subject. He therefore gave this notice, that on the 22nd inst. he meant to move, that all the petitions which had been presented upon this subject, be referred to a select committee, to examine and report thereon. The impression out of doors was, that it would be madness to open this trade to foreign competition; and, notwithstanding the determination expressed by ministers to persevere, a strong hope was entertained, that they would depart from that intention, on seeing the distress which their new course of proceeding would calculate to bring upon the country.

Mr. *Huskisson* was desirous of merely stating now, that the opinion noticed by the hon. gentleman, that the quantity of silk goods to be introduced from France by the proposed alterations of the law, would be precisely the quantity at present brought in by smuggling was no opinion of his. Whoever might have advanced it, he was no party to it. He should not at present enter into the discussion of the great question; but on the 22nd, he should be ready to debate the merits of the bill, and to meet the question upon principle.

Sir *T. Lethbridge* was glad that the discussion would so speedily take place, but he would have been more satisfied, if the right hon. gentleman had given them hopes that he would assent to the appointment of the committee. If the manufacturers complained of one thing more than another, it was that no satisfactory reasons had been assigned for the intended alteration of the law.

Mr. *Davenport* expressed his regret that ministers were not more explicit on the subject.

THE CURRENCY—COUNTRY BANKERS' NOTES.] Mr. *R. Gordon* rose to present a petition, to which he called the serious attention of the House. This petition, though not numerously was as respectably signed as any ever laid upon the table of that House. The subscribers were proprietors, farmers, and others, resident in and near Cirencester. All agreed in opinion, that the ministers were wrong in the course which they were about to take respecting the currency, and prayed, that the government would be just pleased to do nothing at all. It was, he thought, inexpedient to touch so delicate a matter as the currency, until the effect of the panic had subsided, and things had worked round their own remedy.

Mr. *Benett* bore testimony to the great respectability of the petitioners, and concurred in their opinion, that a more unfortunate time than the present could not have been taken for agitating this important question.

Sir *T. Lethbridge* thought the time had arrived, when it was imperative on government to do all in their power to place the currency upon a solid basis. The panic was passing away, and what was now doing would tend greatly to remove the want of confidence which prevailed in money matters. The plan now in progress would tend to secure to the poor man the full produce of his industry in a coin which could not be depreciated. He had no doubt that the return to a metallic circulation could be carried into effect with very little difficulty, for there was gold enough in the country to fill up the vacuum formed by the disappearance of

the small paper currency. There was, however, one part of the consideration which had been entirely overlooked by the distinguished speakers who had discussed the question last night. He alluded to the remote contingency of the restriction of Bank cash-payments, should a time of war arise, and the government find themselves unable to uphold a circulation in specie. That was a material part of the subject which had not been discussed.

Sir *John Brydges* thanked ministers for the course they had taken respecting the currency. The most fallacious system which this country had ever acted upon was that of the small-note circulation. He descanted upon the evils which had arisen from it, in districts where bank-failures had taken place. It was shocking to witness, as he had done, such scenes of heart-rending distress.

NAVIGATION ACT—TREATIES WITH SOUTH AMERICA.] Mr. *Huskisson* moved the order of the day, for the House to resolve itself into a Committee on the Navigation-act, with a view of enabling government to carry into effect the stipulations of the treaties lately entered into between Great Britain and the republics of La Plata and Colombia. In each of these treaties, stipulations had been introduced, that, for a certain term of years, ships not built within these two new states should, nevertheless, be recognized by Great Britain as their national ships. It was generally known, that by the navigation laws, foreign ships were only allowed to bring their own national produce to this country, without incurring additional duties: that is, they were not allowed to be the carriers of the produce of countries, other than their own, except on payment of an extra impost. But when these new republics had passed into a state of independent existence, in opening a commercial intercourse with them, it was obviously impossible to apply to them this part of the provision of the navigation laws; for the parent states had so entirely prevented their being in any condition to form a commercial marine, that when they had eventually succeeded in becoming independent states they had no trade, and, consequently, no ships. If in this state the navigation laws were to be enforced against them, their produce must be exposed to the extra duties, from the circumstance of their necessities compelling them to have it exported in ships not of their own building. It was, therefore, to relieve them from this harsh provision, in the opening of their commerce with Great Britain, that stipulations were made in these treaties, which, for a limited number of years, until they could build shipping, allowed them to trade to England in foreign vessels, upon the terms of a national marine. The only alteration now proposed in the navigation laws, was to legalize this provision, in favour of the states of La Plata and Colombia, making at the same time such arrangements as would require the due proportion of bona fide native crews. His proposed measure, besides these alterations, was also meant to give the Crown a prospective power of making similar arrangements with other states that might establish independent governments under the same circumstances. His intention was, to move for leave to bring in a bill.

Mr. *Robertson* strongly condemned this miscalled and delusive system of reciprocity, but which was, in point of fact, no reciprocity whatever. They were now called upon to admit French ships into their own trade.

Mr. *Huskisson*—I did not say a word about French ships, which have nothing to do with the present question.

Mr. *Robertson* contended, that measures of this kind, which were every day pressed forward by government, shewed a total absence of that high national feeling which had influenced the councils of Great Britain, until these late times in which they lived had cast a new light upon the whole range of their commercial policy. It was a delusion to call the present project one of reciprocity; for England, overloaded with taxes as she was, was giving away a decided national advantage, without receiving the slightest equivalent. The repeal of so essential a part of the navigation laws must have the speedy effect of throwing the trade of these new states into the hands of foreigners of all nations, who would flock to these republican governments, where they could soon acquire the rights of citizenship, and establish themselves with sufficient shipping; which could be obtained, from their greater exemption from municipal burthens, at one half the expense at which the British could provide the same marine. Thus the carrying trade of Colombia, instead of being kept by England, would be flung into the hands of foreigners, contrary to the na-

tional policy of former times. Thirty years ago, no British minister would have dared to have made such a proposition to parliament; and, so opposed was it to the wish of the people, from one end of the country to the other, that he hoped the time was not far distant when no minister would presume to repeat such an application, in defiance of the direct interest and policy that had raised this country to a pitch of greatness, from which ministers were daily doing all in their power to pull it down. Impressed with this conviction, he would give his strongest opposition to the present bill. But, from the union between the government and the gentlemen opposite, opposition would be vain, and all he could do would be to raise his voice against so mischievous a career, and to deplore the infatuation which had led to it.

Mr. *Heathcote* wished to ask the right hon. gentleman opposite, whether the effect of these new measures had not been to diminish the number of British seamen, in the general British trade? From returns which he held in his hand, he saw that though the shipping had increased, the number of British seamen had diminished.

Mr. *Huskisson* was unable to comprehend to what relaxation of the navigation laws the hon. gentleman alluded. The great principle of the navigation laws; namely, that the shipping of other countries trading to England, should be confined to the conveyance of their respective commodities, unless on the payment of additional duties, remained the same. With respect to the decrease of the seamen, he was not prepared, off hand, to explain it, if it were a fact. In time of peace it was probable that the commercial interests, though they had increased their shipping, had not, in the same degree, augmented their number of seamen. They might have economized in the latter, and perhaps had done so. There was, however, no alteration in that provision of the navigation laws which required the master and two thirds of the crew to be British subjects.

Mr. *Hume* wished to ask the right hon. gentleman whether he meant to redeem the pledge given last session, relative to a reduction in the duty on timber, and other articles imported for the purpose of ship-building. When he and others, last session, agreed to the reciprocity duties bill, they were assured that such a reduction would be effected, and it was on that ground that he supported the measure. It was then clearly understood that all materials used in building and navigating our ships, which were transported from foreign countries, should have a reduced rate of duty affixed to them. The impression on his mind was, that if ministers did not remove the heavy duties on timber used in ship-building, as well as on canvass, cordage, and various other articles of a similar description, this country would lose her mercantile navy; and on the existence of that mercantile navy depended the equipment of our ships of war. We had now 500 vessels of war; a greater number than was possessed by all the maritime states of Europe beside, and infinitely more than the exigencies of the country could require. If ministers were correct in keeping up shipping to this extent, it was right that the House should inquire whether they were taking proper measures to secure an ample supply of seamen. For his own part he thought that the mercantile navy was sinking. With this impression, he wished to know, whether it was the intention of ministers to take off the duty on timber used in ship-building, on hemp, and on other articles required in the mercantile navy? The pledge given last year had not been redeemed, and the interest of the country was likely to suffer in consequence.

Sir *R. Fergusson* said, that the effect of the present system would be, that the whole of the ship-building would be carried to other places. Merchants would send to Canada or New Brunswick for the tonnage they required. The number of ships constructed in those ports every year, was so great, that it was difficult to procure sailors to man them. When, therefore, the merchants of this country sent a vessel out to any of those ports, it was customary for the men to leave her, and to go on board some of the newly-built vessels, which they navigated to England at a great advance of wages.

The House having resolved itself into a committee,

Mr. *Huskisson* observed, that the position relative to the connexion of this country with certain of the South American states, which had recently been laid down by the hon. member for Grampound, was manifestly erroneous. Treaties had been entered into with Colombia and Buenos Ayres, states which could not, by possibility, have any shipping of their own at present; and his object was to relieve them, under these peculiar circum-

stances, from the injurious operation of the navigation laws, if they sent their produce to this country in ships not belonging to them. Would it not be a most strange thing, when this country had negociated a fair and equitable treaty of commerce with those powers, if ministers were to turn round and say, "We will still adhere to our old code of laws, and, as you have no shipping of your own, you will be precluded from having any commerce whatever?" The hon. member was bound to show how this could be done with justice. How could we adhere, under these circumstances, to the strict letter of the navigation laws. How could we enforce this provision of the navigation laws against states which had no shipping of their own, and at present no possible means of building any?

Mr. *Hume* repeated, that the mercantile navy of England was rapidly declining. In 1822, the amount of foreign shipping brought into this country was 469,000 tons; in 1823, 582,000 tons; in 1824, 759,000 tons; and last year it was upwards of 1,000,000 tons; while the shipping of the country remained stationary. In his view of the case, this was owing to the impediments thrown in the way of the ship-builders, by the heavy duties laid on all the articles used in building vessels. He therefore wished to know whether it was or was not intended to grant a reduction of duties on those materials?

Mr. *Robertson* said, that this was another proof of the mischievous consequences of the theoretic system on which the legislature was proceeding. Let the government take off all the taxes, and then there would be something like reciprocity between this and other countries. If this were done, we could compete with —ay, and beat—the French, the Prussians, the Russians, or any other maritime power. But, while this immense load of taxes was continued, it was impossible that what was denominated reciprocity could prevail. Providence seemed, in an especial degree, to come to the assistance of this nation, when ill-judged measures threatened to injure it most severely. In the present instance, the internal commerce of England had increased amazingly. The trade with Ireland, in particular, was greatly extended; and the consequence was, that the decay of our foreign commerce was not attended with such ill effects as must otherwise proceed from its diminution. He strenuously advised the legislature to cultivate the commerce of Ireland. Many of the measures which had recently been adopted by the legislature, were, he thought, exceedingly objectionable. They had gone too far in removing the sinking fund, to the manifest detriment of the public creditor. Perhaps, at the end of the year, notwithstanding all their fine theories, they would not have means sufficient to pay the dividends.

The resolution was agreed to, and leave was given to bring in a bill, "to give effect to Treaties of Commerce with countries in America, not at present provided with National Shipping."

CONDUCT OF MR. KENRICK.] Mr. *Denman* wished that the entry on the Journals of last session, relative to this case, should be read. It was his intention to have moved, that on this day the House should resolve itself into a committee to investigate this subject further; and then, in that committee, he would proceed to examine witnesses. Since he had come down to the House, he had heard that the gentleman who was the object of this charge was not perfectly prepared to meet it, as he was not provided with counsel. Now, although he did not wish to take any undue advantage of that gentleman, he would persevere from day to day, as far as the business of the House would permit him, until he had brought this matter to a termination. He meant to move that the House should resolve itself into a committee; but, whether that committee should take place this day or on any other, he would leave to the decision of the House. If the gentleman who was the object of this charge thought that the direct examination of witnesses this day, leaving to him the privilege of cross-examining them on a future occasion, would answer his convenience, and be sufficient for the attainment of impartial justice, he was ready to adopt that course.

Mr. *Denison* said, he had just seen Mr. Kenrick, who, as he did not know whether the charge would or would not be entertained this day, was not prepared with counsel to meet it. He was, however, most anxious that the charge should be gone into as soon as possible. He begged leave, under these circumstances, to suggest, that the discussion should be adjourned until Thursday next.

Mr. *Peel* said, he had no objection to that course, but as the matter was before

them, he wished it to be decided as speedily as possible.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, it did appear to him that the House of Commons, which at that moment was engaged in the consideration of matters of the most portentous nature, ought not to have its attention divided by the introduction of this inquiry. Was it proper, at such a time, that, night after night, the Commons of Great Britain should waste their time in discussing the merits of this story of a Surrey justice and the fleece of a ram?

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that the way to administer substantial justice was, not to proceed until the person accused was prepared to make his defence. They might then proceed with the accusations. With this object in view, the inquiry ought to be postponed until Thursday.

Mr. *S. Bourne* knew of no means by which this inquiry could be prosecuted, except that of examining and cross-examining witnesses on the same day. It was evident, that a very different aspect might be given to the case, if witnesses were examined directly on one day, and were subjected to cross-examination on another. Such a proceeding would form a most mischievous precedent.

Mr. *W. Lamb* could not help expressing the strong objection which he entertained against going into this inquiry at all. The case, so far as he could comprehend it, was, that the accused party had, without sufficient grounds, committed an individual for felony. Admitting that to be the fact —supposing, for argument's sake, the individual to have been actuated by vindictive motives—still, he contended, that this was not the place to institute a prosecution, or to seek for redress. If such a principle were allowed, parliament would be constantly applied to, instead of the courts of law. Every trespass, every trifling error, committed by a magistrate, however innocently, would be brought before parliament. He would ask, were they fit to exercise judicial functions in a case like this? Did it make any difference whether the accused party was a magistrate for Surrey, or one of the justices of the great session of Wales? Some of the acts alleged against him were neither perpetrated in his magisterial nor judicial capacity. The House, it seemed, was called on to exercise its judgment, not merely on any thing improper that might appear after judicial inquiry, but they were asked to go further, and to look into any act of his life which might be pointed out, no matter by whom, as oppressive or fraudulent. Was the House ready to assume a power to that extent? Was there no remedy, if a magistrate misbehaved himself, but an appeal to parliament? Every case of injury, which the complaining party had the power of prosecuting in a court of law, might be brought before parliament, if the system was once tolerated. He did not think that this was the constitutional course; and he must say, that of all things, he viewed with the greatest sorrow and alarm, a judicial sentence passed by a popular assembly. If that House proceeded to pronounce sentence of condemnation on individuals, they would, in the end, shake the whole system of constitutional law, and lay the foundation for violence and injustice. Of late years motions of this kind had been made, which, as they enlisted the feelings of men, were exceedingly dangerous. Last session, a motion was submitted to the House relative to the case of Mr. Smith, of Demerara. The House was called on to vote a condemnatory address; and, in support of the case, documents were adduced, not one of which would have been received as evidence in a court below. Any precedent of this kind he considered most dangerous; and therefore he intreated the House to proceed no further in this business. There might be some inconvenience in this course; but it would be better to put up with it, than to encounter the peril which an opposite line of conduct would certainly create.

Mr. *Brougham* wished to say one word with respect to the evidence adduced in the case of Mr. Smith. He admitted, that there was not one document which would have been received in a court below in this country. But, it unfortunately happened, that the evidence on which that case was founded, though it would not be received here, was received in Demerara.

Mr. *Peel* felt very strongly the observations of his hon. friend; and, if this had been an original motion, perhaps he would have acceded to his view of the case. But, as the inquiry had been already entertained, he thought there would be considerable difficulty in stopping where they were.

Lord *John Russell* said, it was a principle of the constitution, that judges should only be removable for partial or improper conduct; and it seemed to him

quite clear, that when a serious stain was thrown on the character of a person in a judicial situation, it was the duty of that House to inquire whether the individual was fit to exercise the important functions attached to his situation. This was due to the constitution of the country and to the judges themselves, whose respectability alone could be supported by the general opinion which the country entertained of their uprightness and integrity. Whether a court of law was or was not open to the complainant, was a matter of little importance in this case. The redress granted in a court of law was redress to the individual for the injury he had suffered. But when the subject came before that House, it was not for compensation to the individual. The question then was, what step should be taken for the sake of the public, with respect to a judge who was charged with having violated the principles of justice in a transaction between man and man? The best way, he thought, would be to proceed with the case on Thursday. The entry in the Journal, of the 27th June, 1825, was then read, as follows:

"Mr. Denman, in his place, charged Mr. Kenrick, one of his majesty's justices of great session in Wales, a justice of the peace for Surrey, and recorder of Dover, 'that he preferred before a neighbouring magistrate a charge of felony against a poor man named John Franks, without any sufficient proof of the same; on which charge the said John Franks was committed to prison, where he remained till he was discharged at the sessions by the verdict of a jury, acquitting him instantly on the same evidence which had been adduced by Mr. Kenrick as the ground of his commitment:—That, during the imprisonment of the said John Franks, Mr. Kenrick made repeated offers to procure a lenient sentence to be passed upon him, provided he would plead guilty to the charge; and applied to the clerk of the peace, and the chairman of sessions, to permit him to withdraw the prosecution, alleging Franks's good character as a reason for wishing to do so:—That, shortly afterwards, in answer to some public animadversion on his own conduct, he wrote and published a ibellous letter against the said John Franks, calumniating his character, and imputing to him crimes of which he was not guilty.'"

Mr. *Denman* said, that as he had received no notice of the opposition which had broken out upon this occasion, he wished, before he made his motion, to know whether it was intended formally to oppose it; because, if such an intention existed, he should be sorry to have his lips sealed, by simply making that motion in the beginning, instead of reserving it for the end of such observations as he might deem it proper to address to the House. He thought it was impossible for any man who had read the first page of the history of England, to doubt that it was the duty of parliament to inquire into the conduct of judges. Were they to pause in exercising that power, because his acts were amenable to the law of the land? The very fact that they were contrary to the law, was an aggravation of the offence. If any man really entertained doubts on this subject, he should like them to be expressed. He thought the House had acted most properly in entertaining this inquiry last session; and he was sure that they would be guilty of an abandonment of a most sacred duty, if they did not proceed with it now. He should move "That the said Charge be considered in a committee of the whole House on Friday; that a copy of the Charge be communicated to Mr. Kenrick; and that Mr. Kenrick have leave to attend the House, on Friday, by himself, his counsel or agents."—Agreed to.

Bank Charter and Promissory Notes Acts.] Mr. Brogden appearing at the bar with the report of the Resolutions of the committee on the above acts,

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that as he had not had an opportunity last night of delivering his opinion on the nature of the plan proposed by ministers, he would, in as few words as possible, state explicitly what his view of the subject was. He could assure the House that his opinions were not at all altered after hearing most attentively the whole of this protracted discussion. With the greatest wish to concur in the sentiments of the majority on this occasion, he felt, after giving the question the best consideration in his power, that they were going to legislate in a most improvident and imprudent manner. He was not a favourer of that sort of currency which it was the object of the chancellor of the Exchequer to remove. He wished as much as any man for a sound metallic currency; and when misfortunes, such as those which had lately occurred, pressed heavily on the

poor, he should exceedingly rejoice if they could be obviated by the operation of a metallic currency. But he thought the House was proceeding to legislate without having made sufficient inquiry into the causes of the present disastrous situation of the country; and he was sure there was no instance on record where the legislature, at an equally momentous crisis, had acted with equal precipitation. Some hon. gentlemen had attributed our present calamities to one cause; others had ascribed them to another. Surely, then, as we were not agreed upon this most important point, it became us to examine into and clearly ascertain it, before we could hope to remove the effects that had been caused by it. He could scarcely convince himself that he was addressing the same body of gentlemen who constituted this House in 1822, and who almost unanimously concurred in passing the act for continuing the issuing of one and two pound notes for ten years from that period. This measure was brought forward immediately after the repeal of the Bank Restriction act, and the minority against it was only six. No one had insisted, that the issue of those small notes was the primary cause of our present distress; and yet the issuers of them were to be dealt with as if this was the case. From the best information from different parts of the country, it appeared that manufacturers were everywhere obliged to discharge their workmen, because they had no currency wherewith to pay them their wages. Yet, in the face of this state of things, we were called upon still further to contract, or, more properly speaking, to cause the entire withdrawal of the small issues of the country bankers; for such must be the immediate effect of this resolution, although by the letter of it, the continuance of the circulation of these small notes was permitted for three years. And how was the deficiency in the currency which would be caused by such withdrawal to be supplied? He was extremely happy that, in the course of this discussion, nothing had been said that could in any way affect the character of the country bankers as a body, although the banking system itself had met with most liberal abuse; and yet it was somewhat remarkable, that hon. gentlemen, who had for years fostered and encouraged this system, should now all at once have discovered its pernicious tendency. The whole system of trade might just as well be found fault with as the banking system; for a nefarious system of gambling had of late prevailed to a most alarming extent in most of our commercial transactions; and some of these wild speculations, he was sorry to say, had been countenanced by members of that House; and, owing to their having been so countenanced, had caused more disastrous consequences than the breaking of twenty or thirty country bankers. He must confess that the division last night had surprised him in the extreme; but he would make bold to say that, notwithstanding the majority, as to the number of votes, was so great in favour of the resolution, the general sense of the House was against it. The course, in his opinion, most proper for the House to have adopted would have been, in the first place to have instituted a most careful inquiry as to the cause of the distress. He himself attributed it principally to the Bank, the bubbles, and the over-trading. A pause in legislation ought, at any rate, to be made, until the present ferment had subsided; for, proceeding to legislate on this point in the agitated state of the country, was like beginning to rebuild a house which had been burnt down before the rubbish had been removed. The Secretary of State for the Home Department had contended, that this measure must be carried "now or never;" but for his part, although he wished the country ultimately to return to a metallic currency, he did not conceive "now" the proper time for doing so. As far as the country bankers were concerned, the issuing of these small notes was the most troublesome part of their business; and he was convinced, that if they were left to themselves, they would, by degrees, withdraw them from circulation; but it was galling to them to have such a resolution as the present passed, which cast a stigma upon them, and obliquely insinuated, that the whole of our present distress was to be ascribed to these issues. He thought it might be as well, however, to let the present measure pass in silence; as he could not hope to defeat it, when he saw so many hon. gentlemen whose opinions were against it, prepared to give their votes for it. With regard to the proposed plan of joint-stock banks, he was convinced that country bankers of good credit had nothing to apprehend from it; for, after having passed safely through the late severe ordeal, confidence in them would be so strong as to

enable them successfully to compete with any joint-stock banks; and, if there could be found gentlemen willing to enter into these last-mentioned establishments, he saw no objection to their formation. He hoped, however, that government, before they passed the present measure, would relieve the Bank from the weight with which it was at present incumbered. The Bank had a duty to perform to the public, and it ought to have its hands untied, so that it might be able to perform it. He did not despair, that, in a mighty country like this, things would settle down to their proper course; that in time the paper circulation would be got rid of; and that, if there was a demand for gold, there would be a corresponding supply—on the old mercantile principle, that when a legitimate demand existed, an adequate supply would come.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, in the observations he had to make, he should confine himself to that which was purely practical. He believed, that the amount of gold coin likely to be wanted, in order to replace the one-pound notes withdrawn, had been very greatly under-estimated; as he had no doubt that four-fifths of that which was issued would, in the first instance, be hoarded; and until those persons were supplied who, under the influence of distrust, were thus endeavouring to secure themselves, there could be no free circulation of sovereigns. As he had said before, he was still of opinion, that it was impossible to return to a circulation entirely metallic, unless some alteration took place in the Mint regulations. In that opinion he continued firm; and was decided in his conviction, that if government were to pursue, in their strictness, the measures they were driving forward, they would bring the country to a stand-still; but in this, whether he were right, or whether wrong, it had nothing to do with that which he wished more immediately to urge.—The immediate object was, to supply some medium of sufficient security, that could not be run in more rapidly than it was physically possible to meet, and which would not be hoarded. The resolution which went to allow the bankers' notes to pass for three years longer, was, in its nature, nugatory. That species of circulation was discredited in public opinion; and the being thus cried down was nearly tantamount to its immediate suppression. He should, therefore, on the bringing up the report, again move as an amendment, that the words "Bank of England" be omitted; convinced that the only possible way in which the government could carry into effect their own views, would be, in the first instance, to allow the notes of the Bank of England to take the place of the private paper; as then, unshackled by the opposition of any private interests, they might afterwards deal with the matter as circumstances might enable them to do; and, instead of the bankers having an interest in filling the country with their own notes, to the exclusion of gold, they would find them anxious to get coin into their respective districts, and only using the Bank paper, when the other could not be obtained, either in sufficient amount, or with sufficient rapidity. But, above all things, the government ought to make every effort to flood the country with silver. During the times of the Bank restriction, the only real embarrassment known was the occasional deficiency of silver coin to pay the labourer. By the substitution of Bank of England notes for the paper withdrawn, and by throwing into the circulation an ample supply of silver for all minor payments, it was possible that the measures proposed might be carried through; but it was evidently not possible that the operation could be performed in any other manner.

Mr. *Ellice* said, that having voted in support of the proposition of the chancellor of the Exchequer, in opposition to certain opinions which he had been in the habit of expressing, he was desirous of explaining to the House the grounds of his vote. He quite concurred with his hon. friend, the member for Callington, as to the distressing examples which the history of our currency afforded of the effects of that nefarious system which now, thank God! they were about to get rid of. When the bill of 1819 passed, he was in a small division; not that he objected to a metallic circulation, but because he wished to have a standard accommodated to the circumstances of the country, and which would keep pace with the contracts of individuals. However, the House passed that bill, determined, at all events, to make the experiment of compelling the country to meet all their engagements, and individuals to fulfil all their contracts, according to the ancient standard. Now, he would ask, what were the consequences of departing from that resolution? The result was, that every departure made it more difficult to approach that period

when its provisions could be carried into execution; and, if the postponement which his hon. friend had recommended was adopted, that difficulty would be still more increased, and then, in fact, we might despair of ever arriving at the great object so much desired. There were three periods in which immense quantities of paper had been circulated in the country. The first was in 1813-14; the second in 1817 and 1818; and lastly, in 1824 and 1825. He could not but think there was a great deal in the argument of the hon. member for Taunton, that at the termination of the war there was a great facility of obtaining gold from the continent, as we had means of export then which did not at present exist. In his opinion, therefore, it was more in the power of the country, in 1815 and 1816, to return to a metallic currency, than it ever had been since. The right hon. the President of the Board of Trade would refer them to the amount of our exports of last year; but, he would ask, how much of them had been paid for? One half of them had gone in foreign loans, which might never be repaid; and therefore no argument could be founded on the amount of our last year's exports, to shew the capability of the country to return to a metallic currency. Much had been said about theory, and the opinion of practical men of business; for his own part, he had listened attentively to what had been advanced, and he believed the House was legislating at present in utter ignorance of consequences. But, was that any reason why we should go on with these pitiful one and two pound notes? Far better, as his hon. and learned friend, the member for Winchelsea observed, to return to a currency which we understood; and if the time should arrive when it should be a question whether the country was able to fulfil its engagements, then let us manfully look at the difficulties, and take measures to provide for them. It was not a little strange, that every time that an approach had been made to cash payments, the country had started back from the prospects which opened. In 1815 and 1816, the pressure was on the agricultural interest. How that had been alleviated, he need not say; but it appeared that, in 1817 and 1818, an immense quantity of paper was issued, and that relieved the distress for the time, to fall again with greater force, at a subsequent period, on some other great interest of the country. The committee of the right hon. gentleman sat in 1819, the consequence of which was, that we were to return to cash payments. Every one remembered the distress which ensued, and then the country bankers issued their notes. Then followed, in 1824 and 1825, what was called great prosperity. The momentary pressure was removed, but it removed us still further from the object we had in view. He thought the statement which had been made by the hon. member for Taunton, of the amount of the Bank of England's engagements for the government, was entitled to great attention. In fact, by a paper which he held in his hand, it appeared that the Bank had 700,000*l.* locked up in Exchequer bills more than had been stated. The honourable Bank director, who favoured them with some explanations last night of the connexion between the Bank and the government, had said, that it had not been the wish of the Bank to advance money on mortgages, or on the dead weight, as it was called; but they had been induced to do so by the representations of the government, who stated it as being for the interest of the country. He wished to know where the blame was to rest. For his own part, he could not attach any blame to the Bank, placed as they were, in a situation of difficulty, with the merchants pressing them on one side, and government on the other. At the time when the resumption of cash payments was first agitated, the Bank declared they could not, with safety to themselves or the country, attempt to pay in gold, unless ten millions of the nineteen millions then owing them by the government, was repaid. Yet the Bank, in 1825, were placed in the same situation, with respect to their advances to government, that they were in when they declared they could not, with safety, attempt the resumption of cash payments. The state of our currency had led to that accumulation of money which finally exploded in all those loans which had exhausted the treasure of the country. When we came to look for all this money to replace our circulation, he agreed with the hon. gentleman, that we should find the country in a very curious situation. Much of the present evils arose from over-speculation, and that was caused by the increase of the country circulation, and the reduction of the interest on the national debt. These were the two causes which drove the money out of this country. Russia, Austria, Spain, and the South American

states, Chili, Peru, Buenos Ayres, Colombia, and Mexico, got, in the way of loans, that money which we ought to have at home, but which we could not now get back. These loans were what, in a great measure, produced a scarcity of money, because it was all exported by men who thought that they saw a chance of greater profit by advancing it in foreign loans, than by keeping it at home. His hon. friend, the member for Northampton, had alluded to the late bubbles as one of the sources of the distress, and as being a means of depriving the country of large portions of solid capital. That, with all deference to the enlightened views of that hon. member, he begged leave to deny. Very little money, if any, had been sent out of the kingdom in that way. The fact was, that although large sums were undoubtedly embarked in such speculations, the property only changed hands; the prices or premiums of the shares passed from the pocket of each man to his neighbour, and if many were totally ruined, and tens of thousands expended, the capital still remained in the kingdom. It was in the loans to all the nations of Europe, and all the republics of America, that the capital was really spent; to them was the gold exported, which the over-issue of paper had driven out of the country. And here he would take the liberty of stating his firm conviction, that, although those countries might go on paying the interest of their loans for a while, not one penny of the original capital would ever be recovered. With their establishments, whether of war or peace, they could not pay them; scarcely one of the whole list, could in any way raise the amount of their revenue so as to discharge an extraordinary demand.—He looked upon the whole question then before them as a struggle between paper, and a something better than paper, and although he did not consider it very safe to touch upon any part of a subject every way so full of difficulty, and in which opinions were so divided, and sentiments so liable to misrepresentation; yet he should not think himself doing his duty, if he permitted the ideas, lately expressed by more than one hon. member upon the subject of the financial state of the country, in case of war, to pass without an observation. Honourable members had asked, what would be the state of the country, if they went to war? The hon. member for Aberdeen said, they could not go to war; that war was impossible. Now, what, he begged leave to ask, was to hinder them from going to war, if war unfortunately should become necessary? The French, in the midst of a national bankruptcy, not only went to war, but carried it on for many years with no ordinary success. If they went to war on the strength of assignats, what was to hinder this country from pursuing the same course? Did hon. gentlemen suppose, because there was a panic among commercial men, and a difficulty in raising money, that the capital and means of the country were wholly gone? Did they suppose a man ruined, because he could not immediately command the means of paying all demands against him? He had frequently asked those who desired him to look at the financial state of the nation, and the overwhelming amount of the national debt, to whom that debt was owing? Why, to themselves—to the nation. They were debtor and creditor; and if ever, unhappily, there should be a national failure, although there would, undoubtedly, be cases of great individual distress arising from such a calamity, yet the nation would still, for all the purposes of war, retain as much power, as ever.—But, although there might not be any diminution of power from financial difficulty, as far as regarded their external relations, he saw many reasons against postponing any longer the return to a sound and wholesome state of the currency. If they were to lose the present moment, and pass it by without applying a remedy, they would, at any future period, find the question surrounded with still greater difficulties. This was the fittest of all times: a great portion of the Bank paper had been changed already into gold; they had gone a great way towards the very circulation they wanted; and, he believed he could venture to say, that a very small portion of the country transactions at present were carried on in private bank paper. If, therefore, they did not pass the bill for a year, they would find, at the end of that year, the whole of the country bank paper in as vigorous circulation as ever. The over-issues would again take place; the gold would return to the metropolis, and they would see people once more on the look out for foreigners, to relieve them of their superabundant capital, by way of loan—one very powerful reason, in his opinion, against any postponement of the present

measure. He would say a word or two in respect to joint-stock banks. If he were a country banker, he would never become a partner in a bank constituted on such a principle. Neither was it likely that any prudent man would embark in such a concern, where he would be entitled only to a tenth or a hundredth part of the profits, and where the business would be conducted by another person, although the whole of his property would be liable in case of mismanagement or failure. He thought that no dormant partner would sleep very comfortably while engaged in such a concern. If the Bank of England had consented to charter banks some good might have resulted: but as the matter was, he thought we had gained nothing at all. He knew something of Scotch banks, and he would say, that if the mode in which they were conducted was inquired into, their management would be found as bad as the worst of our country banks. The way in which these establishments were conducted, was this: they had from the nature of their composition, immense credit; and, as they allowed interest for money placed in their hands, large sums were vested with them, under the confidence of good security. These sums, in time of war, they placed in the public funds, then very low—say, perhaps, 48—and when, at the return of peace, the same funds got up to 99, then the Scotch banks were in the gain of fifty per cent—and were pointed out as models of good management, although the whole might be the result of mere chance; but when, in time of peace, people sought to realise the profits derived from their funded property, and much larger sums were pressed upon the Scotch banks, then with the funds falling, and the rate of interest low, those banks became as hazardous, and as liable to loss, as even those of the sister kingdom. Large sums, for which they paid interest, were to be applied in some way which would make them advantageous, and as the funds, when falling, could not be thought of, the only way which presented itself for the return, was the discount of long bills—some, even running to two years; and thence arose a series of failures, which had proved as injurious to the Scotch banks as to the English, and which, if rumour was to be trusted, had numbered many of them amongst those which had been applicants to the Bank of England for assistance, that they might not be compelled to sell out their deposits in the funds at the present falling price. That was the history of the Scotch banks; and, from the experience it taught them, the House might reasonably doubt the propriety of permitting large masses of individuals to have the power of affecting the currency. If they did, however, give men a licence to deal in the currency, he contended that, with reference to the ground taken against the interference of parliament, they had a right at any time, not only to stop the issue of the notes under that licence, but also to take into their consideration the whole system of policy pursued by those to whom they intrusted that power whenever the country was overpowered by the quantity of their paper. He could not agree with his hon. friend, the member for Newton (Mr. H. Gurney), that they should put an end to the issue of country small notes, and spare those of the Bank of England; for he could not avoid stating it broadly as his opinion, that the measure they were now about to adopt, was neither more nor less than the full execution of the bill passed by the unanimous consent of parliament, in 1819, and bearing the name of the Secretary for the Home Department. He had not hesitated to assert, that the bill then passed had added full 50 per cent to all the taxes and engagements, whether agricultural or commercial, of the country; but he had, in common with many others, consented even to that sacrifice, in consideration of the vast advantages to be derived from a sound and stable currency. The question was then, as it was now, whether they should consent to part with a little to save all, and whether, as at that very moment, they should suffer themselves to be brought to the verge of ruin, or grasp at any thing as a means of security. He really could not, therefore, understand the principle of agreeing to the restriction of the issues of the country banks, and continuing those of the Bank of England. There might be more security, perhaps, in the Bank; but there was, as they had seen, no more security of their paying in cash. Even the measure brought into that House by a noble lord, Bexley, who had brought forward many other plans which he had never perfected, though it might have been a security for the government, to a certain extent of their issues, could not be any security for that greatest of all advantages—their paying the demands upon

them in cash. With respect to Ireland and Scotland, which he understood were to be included at some more remote period in the operation of the present measure; if it was, as he hoped, the intention of the government to establish one general and permanent currency, why should they be excepted even for a short period? What possible injury could be sustained by either by the withdrawal of their paper circulation, and the immediate substitution of even a smaller quantity of specie? If they established a metallic currency in England, how could they reconcile the anomaly of a paper currency on the other side of the Tweed? Even at that moment Scotch notes were in circulation over the greater part of the north of England. That circulation did not, perhaps, amount to more than a million, or a million and a half; but, the smaller the quantity, the greater the easiness of its conversion into gold; whereas, if they did not take that step, the chance was, that it would very much increase, and that the paper currency in the one country would place very much in jeopardy the gold currency in the other. Scotland, he knew, had many powerful advocates in that House; but he earnestly hoped, that if the people of England were to pay, as had been said, a great penalty for the benefit of a metallic currency, Scotland would not be allowed to enjoy any unfair advantage from their sacrifices. If they were to have the free-trade principles carried into full operation, with what consistency could they leave that trade struggling against all the difficulties necessarily attendant upon a great change, to be yet further impeded by a circulation, which at one time may raise wages and all the necessaries of life to a price higher than those of any nation with which they had to compete, and at another reduce them so low as to produce misery and wretchedness amongst every class of society, and unsettle, in either case, all the contracts which may have been concluded before these revolutions took effect? Well had the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer observed, that such a state of things unsettled all the engagements between man and man, and led to those over-issues and re-actions which produced such evils as they at that moment experienced. In the case of the silk trade, he was one of those who had hoped that the resolutions of the President of the Board of Trade would not have been rigidly adhered to, until they had seen the benefits which were expected to flow from the alterations of the currency then proposed, and that they would not have pressed the full completion of their principles, until they had bread at the price that was paid for it by those nations with whom they were in that trade to contend. Without that forbearance, he feared that the principles of free trade of the right hon. gentleman could not be carried into execution, without first involving many of the operative classes in misery, and even starvation. If they looked to the standard of prices for the three hundred years previous to 1797, they would find the price of corn as often cheaper, as it was dearer, than that which prevailed on the continent of Europe, and depending very much upon the nature of the seasons; but, by some extraordinary cause connected with the fluctuations of the currency, since 1797, provisions of every kind, as well as corn, had been always higher than they were abroad. When, however, they had removed the occasion of these changes, by destroying that artificial state of the circulating medium which had existed, it would appear to him very strange if, with the same standard as other countries, and their skill in agriculture, prices did not right themselves. In that case, there would be no necessity for petitioning for a repeal of the Corn laws; those laws would repeal themselves. It would not then be his task to press upon the attention of the House, the deplorable condition of his constituents, the Silk weavers of Coventry, and humbly implore, in their name the repeal of the Corn bill. No! The member for Suffolk (Mr. Gooch)—the most virulent of its advocates, and the head of the agriculturists—would be one of the most earnest in his supplications for relief from the consequences of that act. Seventy shillings would be a frightful price, with a gold circulation, at 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½d. an ounce; and could only be supported by a scarcity, which would almost amount to starvation. The present measure therefore possessed, in his eyes, the double advantage, of not only being a remedy for distress, which existed now, but still more as guarding against the probability of evils to come—amounting, as it did, to a virtual repeal of the Corn bill. There was another reason why he desired the immediate execution of the measure, and that was, the weakness

which it caused the country to exhibit in the eyes of all Europe. It would seem as if the fabric of their credit rested on a bed of sand. Who could have supposed that, after eleven years of peace, interrupted only by a few rumours at the time of the French invasion of Spain, the English funds would have fallen from 97 to 74, in the short space of eight months? Why, it displayed a feeling of security in their credit, less than was allotted to other nations. France had been said to pay a high interest, and people were advised to beware of the danger; yet the French funds had not varied more than two or three per cent. The Austrian, Prussian, Danish, and even the Russian, funds were considered less liable to fluctuation. What could be said, but that all this proceeded from the vices of a system, which they were now, he ardently hoped, about to put an end to for ever? For who could see, without pain, the funds of England abandoned for those of countries which must, sooner or later, terminate their engagements by a national bankruptcy. It was at length time to do justice to all classes, by freeing them from a species of circulation which produced such fatal consequences, and which induced a man at one moment to consider himself worth a hundred thousand pounds, when, perhaps, before the returning season, he might find himself hardly in possession of half that sum. He felt the difficulty and danger attending the execution of this measure, as much as any man; but he would run all risks, rather than continue the present terrible system.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, he had listened, with great attention, to the speech of the hon. member for Coventry, and, although he agreed with him upon some points, he could not but say there was a great deal of inconsistency in his reasoning. At one time, he said the evil proceeded from a reduction of capital, at another, from over-speculation and redundance; and, while he argued that there was no apprehension of the contempt of the nations of Europe, or of any attempts upon the peace of this country from the state of its finances, he, the next moment, deplored the existence of that contempt, and expressed his dread of its effects; first saying, that the evils of the day would go to the root of credit, if not put a stop to; and then asserting, that our credit was already lower than that of any nation on earth. He did not mean to follow the hon. gentleman through all the details of his speech. Although admitting the evil, he thought they were about to apply a violent remedy. The object of his rising was, not to protest against the act of the government, for that, he believed, would be in vain, but to put the House in possession of a fact which had doubtless come to their knowledge, though perhaps in a more mitigated shape than he was about to represent it. It was his painful task to inform them, that the distress in the city had greatly increased during the last few days, and that failures were talked of which would produce effects, in the commercial world, of which that House, nor even mercantile men themselves, could form a conception. He therefore took leave to ask the chancellor of the Exchequer, whether, persevering in his present intentions, in regard to the circulation of the country, he was prepared to say, that any measures were in the contemplation of government for the relief of the existing commercial distress? He wished to state what he meant by the word distress. Many reflections had lately been cast upon mercantile men, as visionary speculators, as a set of schemers, as persons who had voluntarily brought upon themselves the evils of which they complained. He would admit it, for argument's sake, to be true; but he would say, that such a state of things had been brought about, first, by the extraordinary quantity of the circulating medium permitted by government to exist in the country; and next, by the mercantile world taking advantages of that quantity. The government had been enabled by that profusion of money, to make various reductions in the burthens of the country, by reducing the rate of interest upon the debt, and thereby relieving the people from various oppressive taxes. Now, he would ask, whether, the ministers of a country which was purely commercial,—of a country which they had declared to be in a proud and flourishing condition,—of a country which they had announced to be enjoying a revenue so productive as to enable them to reduce the weight of its taxation, and a prosperity so general and solid as to induce them to change the narrow system on which its commerce had hitherto proceeded for a more generous and liberal system;—he asked, he said, whether the ministers of such a country were now prepared, because a change had taken place in the flattering picture they had

drawn of it, to turn round and say to the merchants whom they had hitherto lauded for their activity and enterprise, "You are a parcel of fools and blockheads: instead of trusting to the delusive prospects which were spread before you, you ought to have disbelieved them; instead of embracing them with ready confidence, you ought to have had your doubts and misgivings?" Unfortunately, they had done otherwise; and he therefore came down to the House, and on behalf of the merchants of London, claimed relief from the government. He claimed it, however, not merely on behalf of the merchants of London, but on behalf of the merchants of the country, on behalf of the country itself, on behalf of the revenue, on behalf of the ministers, whom he had hitherto always felt proud and happy to support. He said "hitherto;" for though they had been excellent pilots during fair weather, he was afraid they did not know how to steer the boat in which he was embarked with them, during the raging of the storm. He would shortly state the mode in which, and the reasons why, relief ought to be administered to the distressed part of the mercantile community. Instead of dealing in idle and superfluous words, he would found the whole of his reasoning on a single fact. Cotton, it was well known, was a necessary staple in this country. He would admit, for the sake of argument, that the merchants of Liverpool, Glasgow, and London, had traded very improperly during the last few months in this article; and that they had bought for ten-pence and a shilling, that which, in ordinary times, cost no more than five-pence or sixpence a pound. Could it be wished, that the price of cotton should be reduced still lower? Was the offering of it at that price a sin for which they ought to be punished? Why, they could not find a market for it at that price; no, nor at any price. Let them look at what had been done in the crisis of 1793, when a loan of 50 per cent was made, by means of commissioners, to such merchants as were distressed for want of it, upon a deposit of goods or other security. Those who asked for a relief of three-pence a pound on what cost sixpence a pound, were, he thought, entitled to receive it. When a man, who was ready to deposit 100,000*l.* worth of goods, asked for a loan of 50,000*l.* to preserve himself from being involved in bankruptcy and ruin, he was entitled to receive the protection which he asked; if not for his own sake, at least for the sake of his clerks, of his connexions, of his correspondents, of his bills, which, if they were protested, would be sent back to Glasgow, to Liverpool, and elsewhere, and create misery and disaster wherever they went. His situation, as one of the representatives for the city of London, might perhaps blind him to the importance of the question he had asked; but, if he had any common sense whereby to judge of it, he was fully justified in saying, that there never was a crisis which more imperatively demanded from the government the extension of some aid to relieve it. He asked for no paper relief; he wanted relief for solid property. When a man came forward with such property, and asked for a loan, not greater in amount than a half or a quarter of the value of what he deposited, surely he was worth saving, and deserved the relief for which he prayed. He hoped he had not framed his question in any manner that was at all disrespectful or offensive to the right hon. gentleman; but he wished to know whether the right hon. gentleman was prepared with any measure to relieve the distress which he had described?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that though he had no reason to complain of the manner in which the hon. member had shaped the question which he had put to him, which was certainly neither disrespectful nor offensive in its terms, still he could not help reminding the hon. member, that if he thought his majesty's ministers were such unskilful pilots in a storm, he ought not to have contributed to support them in the management of the boat during the fair weather. He did not pretend to say, that those who supported the measures of ministers were responsible for the errors of those measures, in case they proved injurious instead of beneficial to the community—by no means; the responsibility was with government, and from that responsibility neither he, nor any member of it, wished to shrink; but this he did say, that it was a little too hard to be reproached for the weakness and impolicy of their measures, by those who had been the first to support them. Whether the present ministers were qualified to weather such a storm as now raged, it would be presumption in him to decide; but this he felt himself justified in declaring that he had endeavoured to learn something of the nature of the storm, and that the measure which he had introduced to

meet it was the result of the practical experience which he had acquired of its force and violence. That measure, upon general reasoning, he conceived to be just and salutary, and he was corroborated in that opinion by the view which he had lately taken of the distresses of the country. He could have no objection to answer the question which had been put to him by the hon. member. The question which the hon. member submitted to the consideration of his majesty's ministers was this—that they should follow the course which had been adopted during the distresses of 1793, and should issue, through certain commissioners, a quantity of Exchequer bills to individuals applying for them, on the credit of their goods or of other securities. Now, in cases of this kind, the members of government were placed in a painful predicament. They were surrounded by scenes of distress, of which the colouring was not softened by those who described them. They were told that it was their duty to afford instantaneous relief, and that, too, in a particular way; and if they ventured to look beyond the mere moment—if they exercised the forecast of cautious and prudent men—and if they considered not only the immediate effects of their compliance with the applications made to them, but the result of such compliance as a precedent, they were accused of a want of sensibility to the distresses of the country; they were taunted with a want of knowledge of the true interests of the nation; and every reproach was heaped upon their heads, which it was possible for one set of men to utter, and for another set to bear. He did not complain of this, because it was one of the inconveniences which naturally attached to the responsibility of ministers. He thought it, however, right to say, that it was the duty of ministers, not merely to look at the representations of distress which were forwarded to them, and at the relief which particular measures were calculated to administer to it, but also to bind up their corporeal agency to resist the requests founded upon them, if they were convinced, in their consciences, that a compliance with them would be productive of more harm than good to the community at large. He was of opinion, that compliance with the proposition which the hon. member for London had made, would not be productive of any material benefit. The hon. member had defended that proposition, by a reference to what had been done in the year 1793 and, undoubtedly, there were other cases besides that, in which the species of aid which he recommended had been granted. The circumstances, however, of those cases differed widely from the present. The main causes of the difficulties of former periods, was the external policy of the country, and the danger of internal dissentions arising out of the pressure which that external policy had occasioned to the manufacturing classes. They had something peculiar in their character, and would not afford a perpetual precedent for future advances of a similar nature. But, in the peculiar case which the hon. member for London had stated, where distress arose from overtrading, which had led to the purchase of goods at high prices—indeed, at such high prices that, upon the hon. member's own showing, they could never be repaid by the proceeds derived from the sale of them—in such a case, if they were to follow the course which the hon. member suggested, he knew of no case in which they would not be drawn, by parity of reasoning, to a similar result; and then he knew not by what process of legislation, by what deliberative contrivance, they could prevent such fluctuation of prices as the country had lately witnessed from recurring periodically. For, under such circumstances, every man who was induced by a desire of gain to enter into excessive speculations would reason thus with himself—"True it is, that I may fail; but then I know that I have relief in the sympathy of the public, and in the feelings of government, and of parliament. I care not for the consequences of my schemes; if they succeed, the gain is my own; and if they fail, I have relief from government." Such would be the reasoning of individuals. But the present was not an individual application; it had nothing to do with the situation of the hon. member who had made it more than with that of any other gentleman who represented commercial interests. It was a proposition of such a nature, that a compliance with it would be injurious to the public, and prejudicial to the real interests of commerce, to a degree that would not be at all compensated by any benefits which the temporary relief that it might administer to the distressed would confer. He therefore was bound to say that government would not acquiesce in the proposition. At the same time, if by any relief

which could be administered in the money-market—if by any absorption of that species of securities which were now circulating at a low rate of interest, to be effected by the assistance of the Bank, any pressure could be removed—if the issue so created should find its way through the ordinary channels of commercial intercourse to those who stood in need of relief, that would be a mode of proceeding which, though it might not be immediately effectual, might afford some slight relief, and would be a mode of proceeding which the government would leave the parties interested in it to take, without any objection. If the Bank would administer that species of relief, he, as a member of the government, would have no hesitation, at a future period of the session, to apply to parliament for a grant to repay it any advances which it might eventually have occasion to make. In what other way the government could interfere, with propriety, he confessed he could not see. If the effect of this declaration should be to deprive the government of the confidence of those who had hitherto supported it, he should regret the circumstance; but he could not consent to purchase the confidence of any class of individuals, by acquiescing in a request which he was, in his conscience, convinced would be more dangerous than beneficial to the interests of the country.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, that when he spoke of his confidence being lessened in ministers, he was not speaking of his confidence in the wisdom of their general policy, but of his confidence in their wisdom as to this particular measure.

Mr. *Robertson* said, he had listened with eager attention to the speeches of his majesty's ministers, in which he could not discover any effectual plan for the relief of the distresses which afflicted the country. He had, from the commencement, been the person—almost the only person—who had come boldly forward to blame the ministers for the situation in which the country was placed. That it was daily declining in prosperity, and from no cause more so than from the operation of the measures lately introduced by those ministers, was a conviction strongly impressed upon his mind. It was difficult, he was aware, to adduce proofs of the declining prosperity of the country; however strongly impressed he might be with the opinion that it was in a worse condition than it had formerly been in. One proof, however, of that declining prosperity would be found in a comparison between the available capital of the country, for the various purposes of its enterprise and industry, in 1812, and at the present period. In 1812, Mr. Colquhoun estimated the total of this active floating capital at 430,000,000*l.* The price of grain at that time was exceedingly high; wheat being from 130*s.* to 140*s.* a quarter. This writer took a certain per centage of an average of different years, and these were the results for 1812. The amount of this floating capital was at present only 330,000,000*l.* Now, if we had never adopted the unfortunate new system upon which our commercial affairs were conducted, the whole of this capital would have remained in the country. Since the last peace, capital to the amount of 256,000,000*l.* had gone out of it; leaving, therefore, little more than seventy millions to carry on the industry, and promote the prosperity of the country—a capital totally inadequate for the purpose. It was impossible that with so small a capital, a country of such diversified and extended interests could go on prosperously. Now his majesty's ministers had been mainly instrumental, by the measures which they had recommended, in reducing it to this depressed state. He alluded particularly to the mischievous encouragement which had been given by them in the course of the last session, to the mad speculations which were now so universally condemned. Many of those speculations, which had been brought forward under the name of joint-stock companies, were absolutely illegal before the last session; now, not only did the ministers refrain from opposing them, but, by the repeal of the bubble-act, they opened a door to the very evils which they now felt it necessary to prescribe a remedy for. If the ministers had then done what he considered to be their duty, by preventing those wild speculations, the country would never have been reduced to its present condition. It now, however, behoved them to look a little beyond the present exigency. The measure which was proposed was calculated, he admitted, to relieve the distress felt by the commercial interests; but it was not to those interests that the distress was confined. The manufacturing interests were not exempt from suffering, and the amount of those sufferings was too likely to increase. A great change had taken place in the

condition of the mercantile and manufacturing interests of the country. That change had been produced by the new system which he deprecated, and the consequences of it must, he feared, become still more serious than they had hitherto appeared to be. There were now, in fact, no foreign merchants in England; but the manufacturers were obliged to unite the character of merchants with their own. Such was the nature of existing restrictions, that the property of merchants was locked up in docks, and otherwise, and they were unable to advance their capital for the relief and advantage of the manufacturers, as in better times they had been used to do. The distress which this had occasioned amongst the manufacturing classes of the community was daily spreading; and unless something should be done effectually to arrest its progress, the consequences must be so serious, that it would be impossible to apply a remedy to them. For this purpose, none appeared to him at once so simple and effectual as the advance of Exchequer-bills. It was clear that the commercial men could not make any thing like adequate advances. The labouring class must, therefore, inevitably be deprived of employment, and the landed interest must suffer from the decreased consumption which would ensue. Nothing but the aid of government could prevent this. If they did not step forward, rents could not be paid, and before the end of the year the whole country, from one end to the other, must be reduced to a condition of the most disastrous kind; and how long it might continue no man could tell. At present this might, perhaps, be prevented; but the longer relief should be delayed, the more difficult would it be to apply it. With respect to the measure before the House, he was friendly to its principle; but he thought this was not the time for carrying it into execution, because, at present, he would rather enlarge than contract the circulation; rather assist than impede any thing like a return to a state of confidence in the commercial world. It would be in vain for ministers, after what he had said, to give out, at any future time, that they had not had warning, not only of the dangerous state to which the country was reduced, but of the inevitable ruin which must follow, if they did not exert themselves to avert it. The peace and welfare of the kingdom were involved in the course which ministers might now pursue.

Sir *Henry Parnell* said, that his vote of the preceding night must have sufficiently testified his approbation of the principle of this measure. But, allowing that it, and the other proposal in respect to the banking establishments, would produce a good effect, as he thought they certainly would do, he did not believe they would place the banking system of the country, as a right hon. gentleman seemed to have insinuated, on a permanent and secure footing. He thought people would greatly delude themselves who should permit government to persuade them, that these two plans would do what government said they would do. Seeing what effects the conduct of the Bank of England had always produced on our commercial system at all seasons of similar distress, he confessed his firm conviction that such security as was desired for the future, was and would be unattainable, until their exclusive and mischievous privileges should have been finally got rid of. He knew that this was not a subject well adapted for desultory discussion; but even those hon. gentlemen who were most opposed in opinion upon questions of a nature like that now under consideration, were agreed as to the great extent of the mischief that had resulted from the conduct of the Bank during the past year. In the years 1783, 1793, and 1797, the course which it had pursued, had been precisely the same as in these days: namely, it had gone on in a course of over-issues. And the evil of our banking system, generally speaking, had been, that when it should have been most cautious and sparing of its circulation, it had been most lavish of it; and when commercial embarrassments required that it should be most liberal of its paper, it had been most careful to withhold it. He was satisfied that, until the extensive privileges of the Bank of England were got rid of, in the city of London, as well as throughout the country, there would remain a power of doing mischief, and of increasing the malady under which the pecuniary resources of the empire seemed to labour, that would be acted upon. To the mode in which the gentlemen who conducted the affairs of the Bank of England endeavoured to discharge their duty, and to the correctness and integrity of their motives, he gave every credit. But, seeing that this company, which consisted of an amazingly numerous body of proprietors, had the power of issuing paper to an enormous extent,

it would be folly to suppose that they would not issue it when there was a profit (profit being their object, and a very legitimate one) to be made upon such issue.—He would beg to ask why the late Mr. Ricardo's plan of paying notes upon demand in bars of bullion, should not be adopted?—For his own part, he thought, that every objection which applied to the insufficiency of the gold currency, would be obviated by such a mode of proceeding, particularly now, when the small notes were to be got rid of. Why the plan had not been again acted upon, he was at a loss to conceive. With regard to that plan which had been pressed upon the attention of the House by his hon. friend (Mr. Baring), namely, the plan for employing silver, it appeared to him that it might be adopted without resorting to an alteration of the Mint regulations. He should consider that any interference with the present Mint regulations would be most unwise and injurious. But, though he was not friendly to making silver a legal tender, or altering the standard so as to admit it, he saw no reason why the Bank should not pay in silver bars; the rate at which such bullion was to be taken being previously fixed according to the relative values of gold and silver. And if at any time great fluctuations should take place in the prices of these metals, provision should be made to meet them, so as to obviate any injurious consequences. He had been surprised that no gentleman, on this question of general distress, had attributed some portion of the prevailing difficulties to the existence of the usury laws. If the hour had permitted him, there was no topic upon which he should have felt more disposed to enlarge. In Mr. Tooke's excellent work upon the currency, he mentioned that, during the late pressure, stock and property were sold for money at a loss of from 20 to 30 per cent more than they would have been subjected to in the course of ordinary stock and commercial transactions against time; indeed, he had himself been told by a banker, that he knew of cases where parties had been obliged to sell at a loss of 70 per cent on such property. Why, then, should the usury laws, when a crisis of such a nature might again happen, be suffered to remain? Looking, however, to the opposition which had been made to their repeal by the country gentlemen, he would only ask, whether it might not be very possible so far to remodel them, as to relieve the commercial world? Let them, for instance, remain except as to discounts.—On the whole, the three measures he was prepared to recommend, were—first the doing away with the Bank monopoly altogether, and extending, the privilege of enlarged partnerships to London banks; secondly, the allowing banks to pay in bars of bullion; and thirdly, the repeal of the usury laws. As to the Bank monopoly, his opinion was, that the loss sustained by the country, from the fluctuations to which the mismanagement of their paper issues gave rise, was so great, that no sum of money could be named, as a fit compensation to the Bank for surrendering their privileges, which ought not to be willingly paid by the country.

Mr. Alderman *Bridges* was of opinion, that great evils had resulted to the country from the principles of free trade. Very large importations had taken place, and the foreign merchants drew their bills at such short dates, that great sacrifices were necessary to meet them. He knew one house on which bills had been drawn for a million of money for wool alone. The distress at the present moment was very great, owing, perhaps to over-trading; but that spirit of over-trading he verily believed, was excited by the conversion of the 5 per cents. He thought government might afford essential relief by a timely issue of Exchequer bills. The merchants had plenty of property, but there was no sale for it; and therefore it was of no use for them to look at their books. If they had goods to the amount of half a million, they might as well have so many stones from the street, if money could not be raised upon them.

Sir *F. Blake* observed, that liberality appeared to be the order of the day; the ministers had adopted a liberal policy, and their adherents were determined not to be behind-hand with them, for they were liberal also; but their liberality was in the abuse of ministers, whose policy did not suit their narrow views. Every body was now liberal in turn. Even the gentlemen on the ministerial benches had been liberal on many occasions; but on none had they been more so than in their censures on ministers for their conduct in the present crisis. So far from having any objection to this, he was delighted to see it, and he would encourage the hon. member for Grampound to go and tear the ministers to pieces [a laugh]

He assured the right hon. gentlemen, he did not mean it literally. For his own part, he returned his thanks to ministers for the conduct they had pursued, and requested them to persevere in the liberal line of policy which they had adopted, notwithstanding the gloomy apprehensions which some gentlemen seemed to entertain. Something had been said of a combination. He knew of none; but if there was a combination, he did not know upon what grounds it could be objected to, when its end was the good of the country. He hoped that, although present circumstances might render the temporary suspension of the measures to which he alluded necessary, ministers would, as soon as it was practicable, proceed to carry into active operation the principles of free trade without any restriction whatever.

Alderman *Heygate* said, that the ministers, in the opinions which they expressed, and the conduct which they proposed to adopt, neither consulted the interests of the country, nor agreed with those who usually supported them. The aristocracy and the landed interest, by whom all the measures of ministers were usually upheld, were, upon this occasion, wholly at variance with them. Every body out of doors was of a different opinion from them, and every one who spoke plainly, did not scruple to say that the people were to be sacrificed to a cold-blooded theory. Excepting the members of what might be called the Political Economy Club, there were no persons to be found who approved of ministers on this occasion. Every body else believed that the country was on the eve of a convulsion, and that the measures proposed were calculated to hasten it. By whom were the proceedings of ministers approved? Who supported and cheered their statements? Not those who sat beside them, and who were usually the most vehement of their cheerers; but those who, at other times, were their bitterest opponents. The fact could not be disputed, that the country was reduced to a degree of suffering wholly unprecedented. Ministers might carry the measures which they proposed in that House, but he defied them to carry them into effect generally. Nothing could be more disgraceful than the want of a proper circulating medium. Exchequer-bills were at a discount of 20*s*., and could hardly be sold at all. The best securities were not saleable. Where such a state of things existed, there must be something wrong. He was unwilling to be the evil prophet, but a convulsion was at hand. If hon. members could but see the letters of that morning's post from various parts of the country, which he had perused, they could not doubt the speedy approach of ruin, unless immediate relief came to their aid. He charged ministers with a want of sympathy for the distresses of the people. He regretted it, because he wished to see them popular. The manufacturing and the monied interests were now suffering. The agriculturists thought they were well off, because the blow had not yet come upon them; but he was convinced that their suffering was only suspended, and that another year would not pass before they would be visited with their share of the calamity.

Mr. *Hume* wished that the worthy alderman, while he was abusing the system of political economy, had pointed out what particular part of the system he objected to. If the worthy alderman alluded to the measures adopted by ministers with respect to free trade, he could by no means agree with him. Those measures had met with the general approbation, not only of parliament, but of the country. He could not suppose the country would show such a want of good sense as to turn round at the present moment, and find fault with the operation of those measures. With respect to the present measures of government, he thought they were ill-timed; but ministers were placed in a situation of great difficulty, and it was hard to say what ought to be done. The worthy alderman complained of the principles of political economy; but he hoped that within his own domestic arrangements things were well conducted; that his expenditure did not exceed his income, and that he adopted the best means of providing for his own comfort and independence. If he did so, he acted upon the principles of political economy, which he so much abused; for just in the same sense were they applicable to the affairs of the state. It was not the fault of government that things were not on a proper footing. When they proposed a useful measure, in stepped the worthy alderman, and exclaimed against it. When they abstained from so doing, he equally censured them: so that it was impossible to know what he approved of, or condemned. Before he lavished his censure upon the system of political economy, he was bound to

show what better system he would substitute for it. As a remedy for the evil now pressing, some called for an issue of Exchequer-bills. Now, the Exchequer-bills already in circulation were, at a discount, and if the amount was augmented, the depreciation would be increased. The result would be, that the revenue would be collected in government paper, and ministers would thus be left without means. He should be sorry that the transactions of the government should incur the risk of being interrupted by the issue of Exchequer-bills. He was sure the Bank would afford all the assistance in their power, and would not suffer the public securities to remain in a state of depreciation if they could help it. It was hard upon ministers, in their present difficulties, that they should be taunted on the score of their liberal system of commercial policy, by persons who had no projects of their own to suggest.

Alderman *Wood* was afraid, that the observations of his worthy brother alderman about the want of cheering would not have much weight with the cabinet; for if ministers did not get many cheers, they got what they liked much better, a vast majority. Although the present state of affairs was certainly very distressing, it was better to let matters go on without any legislative interference. An issue of Exchequer-bills under present circumstances would, he thought, produce no benefit, and be contrary to the established principles of political economy. The worthy alderman must have known that two great houses, intimately connected with foreign loans, had that day failed. Foreign stock, too, had fallen very low. Under these circumstances, an issue of Exchequer-bills, though it might afford some relief, could only do so at a loss of from 30 to 40 per cent. Although he differed from his worthy friend on this point, he admired his speech of last night; that was to say, he did not admire the whole of it, for it was too long; but some parts of it were well worthy of attention. His worthy friend had stated, that on a former occasion he had driven the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs out of the House, by one of his speeches. His speech of last night had produced the same effect upon him. He could not stay to hear it, but he had voted with him.

Alderman *Heygate* said, he had never meant it to be understood that he had actually driven the right hon. Secretary out of the House. All that he had intended to say was, that in consequence of his speech, the right hon. Secretary had left the House without voting. In answer to the hon. member for Aberdeen, he begged to state, that he objected to the principles of free trade being applied to this country, which, on account of its burthen of taxation, could never compete with foreign rivals.

Mr. *Attwood* said, the worthy alderman who had just spoken (Wood) was of opinion, that it would be contrary to the established principles of political economy, for the government to adopt the recommendation of his hon. friend the member for Sudbury, and to interfere to relieve the embarrassments of the merchants by loans of Exchequer-bills on the security of goods. He would not dispute that point with the worthy alderman, but he entirely agreed with the hon. member for Montrose, that such a measure would greatly embarrass the government. As merchants borrowing such Exchequer-bills would carry them to the market for sale; but, in the present scarcity of Bank notes, no sale could be effected, except at a great depreciation. Exchequer-bills were now at a discount of 20*s.*; additional sales would reduce them greatly below that rate, and throw back Exchequer-bills on the government in payment of taxes. The measure proposed would relieve the merchants at the expense of the government, and he therefore was not one of those who entertained expectations of the government adopting any such measure. But, though he did not expect to see the government, for the sake of relieving the merchants, voluntarily placing themselves in a situation of being exposed to difficulties, similar to those which now oppressed the mercantile body, yet, he confessed, that he should not regret to see them placed by compulsion in that condition. What he desired to see was, that the Bank of England should, in the present emergency, transfer to the relief of the merchants the assistance which they had lent to the government—that the Bank should realize at once, all the Exchequer-bills, and all other saleable government securities which they held, without regard to the depreciation of their price, or the consequent embarrassment of the Treasury. Let the Treasury be left to get out of that embarrassment in the best way they were able, but let the Bank assist the merchants liberally and boldly, by lending to

them, on the security of goods and merchandize, the money which they would thus draw in from their advances to government. If it were contrary to any principles of political economy for the government to give extraordinary assistance to the merchants, in a state of commercial difficulty such as the present, it was at least a legitimate proceeding for the Bank to give such assistance. That was opposed to no principle of political economy. The Bank was a commercial establishment. It was precisely such an establishment as the commercial body was entitled to look to, for extraordinary assistance in a crisis of extraordinary emergency. The goods of the merchants were unsaleable. Bills of exchange founded on sales of goods, did not consequently exist, except to a reduced extent. It was a period, therefore, in which the Bank was called on to go out of their customary rules of advancing to the merchants on bills of exchange only, and to afford relief by making advances directly on those goods, on the sales of which bills of exchange were in ordinary times founded. This was a measure in opposition to none of those principles or rules which lately gentlemen had shewn a great disposition to govern themselves by, rather than by the dictates of sound discretion or practical experience.—Having made this observation, he could not sit down without calling the attention of his majesty's ministers to the present condition of the monied operations of the metropolis, which had very recently become subject to additional embarrassments, of the extent of which it was fit they should be apprized. In his experience, he had never known the pecuniary engagements of the metropolis proceed with greater difficulty, or labour under more severe embarrassment than at the present moment, except during that short period, early in December last, which immediately preceded what was called the Panic. What the original cause of all this had been was not a question into which he would now at all enter. Differences of opinion existed on that head; but it was agreed, he assumed, that the state of things which existed during the panic was one of great calamity, and greater dangers; and he would venture to say, however it had in December originated, that the present difficult condition of the money market in London could not exist for one week longer, without witnessing again that state of things being fully re-established. To this condition, therefore, he took the liberty of calling the attention of his majesty's ministers. The amount of Bank notes at present existing in the circulation of the metropolis, was plainly inadequate to carry on its pecuniary operations and engagements; and he recommended that some steps should be adopted to supply at once this deficiency, and to render Bank notes attainable with less of difficulty and of sacrifices than at present, by those who had undoubted securities to give in exchange for them.

Mr. *Pearse* said, he concluded that, when the hon. member for Callington recommended the Bank to pursue the course which he pointed out, he imagined that they had not at their disposal the means of assisting the distresses of the country, and of performing their duty to the public. If the hon. member entertained any such idea, he could assure him it was completely erroneous. Within the last six weeks the Bank had, in the most unlimited manner, assisted in relieving the distresses of the country, in so far as they had been brought to their knowledge. They still continued to feel the same desire to assist the mercantile interest. At the present moment, the discount of merchants' paper by the Bank was going on to the utmost possible extent, provided that paper was good. The tendency of the measures adopted by the Bank during the existing distress, had all along been, to afford the utmost facility, consistent with security, to the discounting of merchants' paper. But all the assistance which could be afforded by the Bank was not sufficient to meet the public difficulties. There was a class of merchants possessing great property, who yet were not in a situation to present bills to be discounted. To this class accommodation might be granted in the best manner, as had been done on former occasions. He agreed with the chancellor of the Exchequer, that the measure to which he now alluded should not be too frequently adopted. It should only be resorted to in extreme cases, and not when individuals might have been induced to enter upon extravagant speculations, in the hope of obtaining assistance from that very measure. He thought, however, that the difficulties of the present period formed a case which would authorize the adoption of the measure in question. It was notorious, that, at the present moment, merchants of the

highest respectability were in a state of the greatest embarrassment, being left without the means of carrying on business. He was aware that the Bank had lately received many anxious communications, in consequence of which, they had done all that it was in their power to do. He, however, suggested as a more immediate mode of granting accommodation to merchants, that government should issue Exchequer-bills under commissioners, as had been done before. He would recommend that the bills thus issued should not bear the same interest as those issued by government, but should be delivered at the highest rate of interest; namely, five per cent. One reason he had for wishing the Exchequer-bills to bear that interest was, that they would then never, in all likelihood, find their way into the Bank. The bills would call forth the money which was at present locked up. Many country bankers had at present large sums in their hands unemployed. They would not discount merchants' paper, and did not like to lend money on the Exchequer-bills at present in circulation, on account of the low rate of interest which they bore. If commissioners were authorized to issue Exchequer-bills, of the description he had mentioned, to the amount of five millions, the measure would have the effect of restoring confidence throughout the country. So effectually did he think the measure would tend to the restoration of confidence in pecuniary transactions, that he was of opinion the commissioners would not find it necessary to issue more than half the amount of bills placed at their disposal, and that half never would find its way into the Bank, but would be taken up by parties who now kept their money locked up; in what he had said, he expressed only his own individual opinions.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, it had been observed, that, because the men now in difficulties were merchants, they deserved every assistance that could be afforded them. Now he was not convinced of the justice of that argument. He did not see why, because men expended their capital in the purchase of goods, they were therefore entitled to relief in a greater degree than any other men who expended their capital in a different manner. It had been said, that it was the duty of the government to afford relief to them, but he thought that the cause of the distress should be first inquired into; if that distress had arisen from the act of the government, or from the consequences of any measure which they had adopted, then, undoubtedly, government were bound to afford them relief; but if, on the other hand, it had arisen from a general indulgence in the spirit of speculation, the government could not be under any such obligation. The hon. member for Callington had spoken of the duty of the Bank to expose government securities in their hands for sale at any price, and to afford relief by the produce of the sales. He thought the Bank were bound to do no such thing, and that by such an act they would be unwisely diminishing the value of those securities. It appeared to him, that there was a large quantity of goods in the market, the owners of which were distressed for want of money to pay those bills that they had wantonly incurred, but their inability brought distress on great numbers of men who had taken no part in these improper transactions. The chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to conceive that the government were not bound to afford this relief, because, by so doing, they would give such encouragement to speculation that there would be no knowing where it would end. Now, he thought that principle of the right hon. gentleman was carried too far, for it amounted to this—that if speculation could be encouraged by a knowledge of the speculator that he would be assisted in his distress, he would speculate on the mere hope of getting back one half of his capital. That supposition, the House would see, was involved in absurdity; for it presumed, that a man would speculate on the prospect of a loss of 75 per cent. It appeared to him, therefore, that though the government ought not to look after individual distress, yet that, when that distress was so general as it was at present, they ought to turn their minds to the consideration of some substantial and immediate relief.

Mr. *Huskisson* observed, that, as the debate had been exclusively confined to that part of the House which considered itself purely practical in the matter in question, he would not travel out of the line which had been pursued, after the example of the hon. member for Coventry, who had entered largely into the consideration of general merits. He begged to call the attention of the House to the situation in which the question had been placed by the great practical authorities who had addressed themselves to the government

and the Bank, as the two parties from whom they expected measures of relief to proceed. One of the members for the city had asked a question of his right hon. friend the chancellor of the Exchequer; but, in putting the question, he, as was very often the case, had pointed out what kind of answer he wished to receive. The question was, whether government intended to issue additional Exchequer-bills, which the hon. member said would afford effectual relief to the mercantile interest. The hon. member for Callington (Mr. Attwood), who was always considered a great practical authority on questions connected with commerce and currency, instead of recommending an additional issue of some millions of Exchequer-bills, said, that the Bank ought immediately to sell all the Exchequer-bills and government securities which they now held. Now, as such a sale could produce no other result than that of drawing into the coffers of the Bank the money of the purchasers, that result would be diametrically opposite to the one desired by the hon. member for London. The opinion of the hon. member for Callington was, that the hands of the Bank should be strengthened, by throwing their securities into the market at any loss whatever. What was the principle on which this was to be done, or what were the difficulties that might be connected with it, he should not now discuss; but he thought that he had shown sufficient for the purpose of justifying his majesty's ministers, when he had thus proved, that, if they were blamed for not coming down at once with effective measures, many of those practical men, who were the most prompt to blame, were not agreed amongst themselves, as to the measures that ought to be pursued; and not only so, but that, following their own particular theories, they came to conclusions diametrically opposite to each other. If there was any thing which could add to the distress of a commercial country, it was the circumstances which had occurred within the last day or two, and which had been alluded to, with respect to the difficulty of procuring bills of exchange to carry on the common mercantile transactions of the day. The great pressure of distress arose immediately from this difficulty; for if bills of exchange, which were the ordinary medium of carrying on the commerce of the country, could be procured, the Bank was perfectly ready and willing to extend every facility which they could properly afford the mercantile interests of the country.—The difficulty was, that there was such a mistrust, and such a want of confidence among commercial men at that moment, that bills of exchange could not be procured, and therefore there were no intervening means of procuring from the Bank this medium of their assistance. That the country must be in a much greater state of distress, and must be much more in need of assistance, when these bills ceased to perform their ordinary functions, there could be no doubt; and the question was, how that distress could be remedied. The hon. member for Callington saw no difficulty in affording that remedy, if the Bank would take goods as a security; but he had observed that that was contrary to the principles of political economy.

Mr. *Attwood*, in explanation, said, he had been entirely misunderstood. What he had said was, that for the Bank to lend money upon goods, in an emergency such as the present, was *not* contrary to any principle of political economy.

Mr. *Huskisson* begged pardon of the hon. member, but he had understood him to say, that if government could not take goods, the Bank might; but that the measure was contrary to political economy. Whether or not it was contrary to political economy, there was a more practical objection to it; such a proceeding was contrary to their charter; the Bank could not deal in goods, nor lend money upon goods. The question then was, what could be done to supply a more abundant circulation? Now, if there was one of the principles of the committee of 1819 in which all agreed, it was this—that if a circulation was furnished by bank notes to supply the exigencies of commerce, and the wants of the country, it was immaterial whether it was supported on the credit of one species of security or another. In other words, it was immaterial whether the number of bills of exchange was greater in proportion to government securities, or *vice versâ*. As far as the currency was concerned, it was immaterial. In other respects, indeed, there might be objections; but, provided the circulation was supplied, and commerce was relieved from embarrassments, it was immaterial whether the Bank supplied issues of notes on bills of exchange or on other security. Then, if the Bank of England, which was not so choked up as had been asserted, as not to

be able to supply aid to the circulation,—if the Bank felt it expedient to buy exchequer-bills in the market, in consequence of that species of security being so much depressed, those purchases would throw a farther amount of currency into the country, and thereby afford it relief. This was the foundation of the plan of his right hon. friend. The hon. gentleman who spoke last had said, that if we created a precedent which went to allow a party who had speculated to excess to come and ask for relief, it would be highly impolitic. His right hon. friend had admitted, that men would speculate more readily if they knew that, under loss, they would be sure to find relief. He admitted, that if we once taught the extravagant trader and the speculator, whenever they embarked in rash schemes, that, should they not get out in time (for that was the object of most of the parties) they might always expect to obtain an asylum in government, it was as much calculated to encourage speculation as the poor-laws were calculated to encourage vagrancy, and to discourage honest industry. Therefore, if the Bank, being at liberty, and if it had the means, would issue, until relief be felt by the public, an additional quantity of paper, he thought it might be done with perfect safety, under the arrangements made between the Bank and his right hon. friend, and his noble friend at the head of the Treasury. This plan did not exactly follow the precedent of the hon. member for London, and, indeed, it would be difficult to do so; but, such was the extent of the difficulties at present existing, that immediate relief was necessary; and he was of opinion that a measure, which might commence to-morrow morning, was better than one which, however excellent in other respects, was distinguished by this great objection—that it could not be adopted until it had passed through all the branches of the legislature. Under these circumstances, he was of opinion that, as a relief of some kind was immediately necessary, the best course was that which had been proposed by his right hon. friend, and which, compared with every other, was the freest from inconvenience and danger.

Mr. *Ellice* said, that the commercial world was now in a complete state of disorganization, and that the evils which had taken place in London were rapidly extending themselves all over the country, which, unless some relief was speedily afforded, must soon be in a state of general bankruptcy. He must do the right hon. gentleman the justice to say, that he had conducted himself with great candour. What he had stated in the House, he had stated in the interviews which he had had with him. He was aware that the Bank of England could not legally advance money on goods; but he thought there was some difference between the Bank advancing money on exchequer-bills alone, and advancing it on them with the further assurance of goods; and he believed that, although the advance on exchequer-bills might relieve the money market, and enable some stock-jobbers to carry on their speculations with greater facility, no relief would be afforded to those who required it quite as much, if not more, and who had no exchequer-bills to offer as security. He did not wonder at the difficulty of procuring bills of exchange; for, in times like the present, men were as jealous of their credit as of their capital. He had never been of opinion that relief could be extended expressly to merchants on the security of goods, but he thought the announcement, that some relief would be afforded them, would be almost in itself sufficient. He admitted that commercial men and country bankers were equally oppressed with present difficulties; and he would put a case which would show the effect of the relief to be afforded. Suppose a country banker had a mortgage offered to him, and he lent money upon it, perhaps with the view of getting his notes into circulation on such good security; suppose that, after this loan made by the country banker, times of distress like the present should arise, and his London banker would advance nothing on his account, he would be unable to pay his own bills which, in a moment, might be poured in upon him—he might say that in six months he could get in the money on this mortgage, but his creditors could not wait till that time arrived. Now, if he could get exchequer-bills on this mortgage, he might go to his London banker, and on their security, he could obtain those advances which would not only enable him to meet his own bills, but afford the greatest relief to the people of his neighbourhood, and neither the mortgage nor the exchequer-bills would ever come into the market. He was acquainted with a case which had occurred during the distresses of 1793, where a party derived support in a moment of great

emergency from the deposit of exchequer-bills, which were lodged under lock and key; and, when the advance was paid, the bills were returned. He believed that this kind of relief was now much wanted. The country at large required something which should give an assurance that business would be kept up in its ordinary manner. It was now no longer a question in Yorkshire, who would pay his bills; for men there looked at each other almost with the consciousness, that they were equally incapable of meeting the demands made upon them. He saw all the difficulties which had been stated by the right hon. gentleman, but still he thought some facility of the kind he had proposed, might be afforded. We must get through this pinch as well as we could, and, for his part, he did not believe, that if government consented to issue five millions of exchequer-bills, more than two millions would be asked for, and that even of that number, not half would ever come into the market.

Mr. *Pearse* complained of the manner in which the Bank had been spoken of on former occasions, and observed, that their conduct had not arisen from a desire of profit, but had been caused by the particular circumstances by which they were surrounded.

The report was then brought up. On the motion that it be read,

Mr. *T. Wilson* observed, that the temporary aid by an increase of bank paper, would not afford relief to all those who were in need of it. If ministers would now declare, that they would grant relief in the old way, that declaration, circulated throughout the country by the press to-morrow, would revive confidence. The assurance of relief was almost all that was wanted.

On the report being read,

Mr. *Attwood* said, he had heard with surprise the assertion of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Huskisson), that the Bank of England were prohibited by their charter from lending money on goods. The confidence with which that erroneous assertion was made, had induced him to refer to the charter of the Bank up stairs. It contained no such prohibition. He would, for the satisfaction of the right hon. gentleman, in his own justification, read to the House a clause in the charter which distinctly recognized the power of the Bank to lend money on goods and commodities of whatever kind.

On the first resolution being read a second time,

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* rose, for the purpose of proposing the amendment which he had moved on the preceding evening, in the committee; namely, to omit the words "or by the Bank of England;" the object being to retain in circulation the one and-two pound Bank of England notes, in order to prevent a total want of circulating medium in those districts where either the bankers had failed, or where the bankers notes should have been withdrawn. The hon. member said, he could not sit down without expressing his entire concurrence with every thing that had been stated by the honourable Bank director opposite (Mr. Pearse). He must say, that ever since he (Mr. G.) had had the honour of a seat in that House, the Bank of England had been most injuriously, he might say, most shamefully treated. Had it not been for the manner in which the Bank had come forward, and the measures they had taken, during the last six weeks, the country would have been in a state of indescribable embarrassment.

Mr. *Wodehouse* said, he was satisfied with the amendment proposed by his hon. friend, the member for Newton. There was at present a great and alarming evil weighing on the country. Merchants were not able to keep their engagements, and any measures which gave us safety, would be a positive blessing. It was the duty of the legislature, under such circumstances, not to waste their time in idle and fastidious cavilling, but to adopt speedy and efficient measures. The only objection to it, he believed, grew out of the scrupulousness of gentlemen as to parliamentary consistency; but, though he had as great a regard for parliamentary consistency as any man, when founded on conviction, yet he thought it was not inconsistent, in some cases, for parliament to retrace its steps. He had sat in two small minorities on the subject of Mr. Peel's bill, and he was persuaded that measure had never been adequately and completely understood. He thought it would be no imputation on the consistency of parliament to reconsider that measure. He wished not to be understood as stating this with any view of opposing ministers. He was ready to give them all the support in his power, to enable them to relieve the country from its present embarrassments. He saw a motion announced for

the repeal of the assessed taxes, and when that or similar motions were made, he should be prepared to vote against them. But he thought government had taken a contracted view of this important subject; and he urged them to reconsider their determination. Unless the amendment of his hon. friend received the concurrence of the House, he thought that the distress of the country during the next six months would be insupportable.

The gallery was then cleared for a division, but none took place, the amendment being negatived, and the original resolution agreed to by the House.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Wednesday, February 15.

Poor Laws in Ireland.] The Earl of *Darnley* alluded to a misunderstanding of what he had said a few days ago concerning the extension of the poor laws to Ireland, when a noble earl, not then in his place, had brought the state of that country under their lordships' consideration. What he meant was, that he should be sorry if the system of the poor laws, or rather of the abuses of the poor law system of this country, were transferred to Ireland, since they could produce only calamitous results. On the other hand, he thought it was not to be tolerated that, in a country boasting of civilization, it should be possible for individuals to die from actual want; yet he had read of a person dying in the streets of Dublin from starvation. He did not himself mean to bring the subject before their lordships, because there was a noble lord, not then in his place (lord Carberry), who had already moved for certain papers on the subject, and had pledged himself to bring it before their lordships. But if that noble lord did not, he was so impressed with the importance of the subject, that after the holidays he would call their lordships' attention to it. He knew that there were great difficulties in the way; that the poverty of the people was not to be cured by charity; that the only legitimate mode of relieving them was by finding them employment; but he thought it was worthy of their lordships' attention to consider whether or not some modified system might not be practicable.

The Earl of *Limerick* rose to express his astonishment that any noble lord should stir a subject fraught with such mischievous consequences as a proposition for introducing the poor laws into Ireland. He was surprised, too, to hear the kind of reason which had been suggested for this extraordinary measure. His noble friend had read in an Irish paper an account of one person having died in the streets of Dublin for want; but, in spite of the poor laws of this country, he had also read in the English newspapers of persons dying from starvation in London. He knew what those laws were, for he had a small property in this country, and he would say, that a more mischievous, a more impoverishing, a more demoralizing system, never existed; and this system, these new projectors wished to extend to Ireland. It was like a man who was suffering under a violent disease, and obliged to have recourse to severe remedies, and who should persist in making some other person submit to the same remedies who was in health. One of the ablest writers on political economy, speaking of the mischievous effect of the poor laws in making provision even for the old and debilitated, had said, "It is impossible it can be otherwise, for it is quite evident, that to make such a provision is to hold out a premium to idleness and profligacy." Ireland was now suffering from an overgrown and unemployed population; but, if the English poor laws were to be introduced, and the people given to understand that all the children they produced would be provided for by the public, the increase of the population would be most alarming. The clergy certainly would profit by it, for there would be a general rush to the priest to get married. The noble lord who had suggested this subject was acquainted with Ireland; but, if the information of that noble lord on the situation of the country had been as accurate as his own, he never would have started the idea. It had been said by somebody, that Ireland was used to acts of forfeiture; but he could assure their lordships that the introduction of the poor laws would be a general act of forfeiture of all property whatever. Why should the noble lord wish to throw more inflammable materials into the caldron which was now boiling, and might soon boil over?

The Earl of *Darnley* explained, what he meant to state was, that he thought it would be worth their lordships' while to consider whether some modified provision might not be made for the poor of Ireland in certain cases.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, February 15.

USURY LAWS REPEAL BILL.] Mr. Serjeant *Onslow* rose to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the Usury Laws. After the repeated explanations he had given, upon former occasions, of his views upon this subject, it would be unpardonable were he now to occupy the time of the House in stating, he said, the reasons upon which his proposed plan was formed. He must, however, express his very sincere regret, that the House rejected his bill last session, because he was certain that, if they had allowed it to pass into a law, the late panic and its attendant distress, would have been much mitigated, and, in some of the great manufacturing districts, many difficulties would have been removed which were now severely felt. He could prove that, in many instances, more than 100 per cent had been given for money in the city of London, notwithstanding the operation of the usury laws. It was said on a former occasion, that his bill would injure the landed interest. He denied that this would be its effect; on the contrary, it would materially serve that important class. He concluded by moving for leave to bring in a bill "to repeal the laws which prohibit the taking of interest for money, or limit the rate thereof."

Mr. *Davenport* renewed his opposition to the measure, and would continue to resist it so long as he had a seat in that House. He saw no necessity for giving leave, year after year, to bring in a bill, which, in a future stage, they were determined to reject. His opposition was not out of discourtesy to the learned serjeant, but to shorten the journey of this bill. His firm belief was, that nothing could be devised more mischievous for the landed interest than the proposed measure. It would necessarily disturb the whole mortgage system, affecting the property of the kingdom, and substitute a wild theory in the room of practical experience. He called upon the government to take a part in stopping the eagerness for introducing such bills, and to look to themselves in time, before a perseverance in error brought ruin upon the country.

Mr. *Bright* was glad that the bill was thus early opposed. It was most extraordinary, that ministers should be absent from the House when such a discussion was coming on. The bill could not be a matter of indifference to them, with reference to their commercial and financial projects; and he trusted that they would take an opportunity either to avow or disavow it. It was not fitting that they should be absent when a question was under consideration which so materially affected the most important interests of the country. The measure must be either a very good or a very bad one; and, in either view of it, it ought to receive the most serious consideration of government. The landed interest ought not to be thus treated. In his opinion, if this bill were now passed, money upon mortgage could not be raised except at a most enormous rate. He hoped the country gentlemen would give their most strenuous opposition to a measure which, if passed, would be attended with the most injurious consequences to their interests.

Mr. *C. Grant* said, that his right hon. friend, the President of the Board of Trade, would have attended, had he not been confined to his house by indisposition.

Mr. *Irving* said, that the bill would not have the injurious effect which some gentlemen apprehended. On the contrary, had it been in operation during the late crisis, the sacrifices made by individuals would have been much lighter than they unfortunately had been; and the House would not have heard of such enormous sums lost in the attempt to maintain the credit of individuals. He, for one, thought that in place of the present crisis affecting the introduction of such a bill, it was rather in favour of its justice and policy. At the same time he was ready to admit that there were a variety of considerations to be well weighed before it passed into a law. He certainly was prepared to vote for bringing in of the measure, and having it amply debated; the House would not take a stand against it in that early stage.

Mr. *Benett* observed, that it was often necessary for those who were in want of money to borrow it at an extravagant rate, purely in consequence of these usury laws. By the repeal of those laws, the security for fair and liberal dealing in the transactions of borrowing and lending would be much increased. Persons of the most honourable characters would not then be deterred from coming into the market as lenders, and in this the borrowers would find their advantage. The proposed measure should have his cordial support.

Mr. *Sykes* thought that his learned friend

had not been fairly dealt with, when it was thus attempted to stop the progress of the proposed bill *in limine*. Instead of endeavouring to defeat it at once, they had better have allowed it to be brought in, that it might be examined in all its bearings, especially with reference to the present crisis. The question was one of the greatest importance, and ought certainly to attract the most serious attention of government. And he was the more anxious that government should turn its attention to it, because he was convinced that the project could not be carried into execution without its co-operation. He confessed his surprise that, among their measures for the regulation of the currency, and for preventing the recurrence of the late calamitous scenes, this subject had not come under their consideration, and that ministers had not proposed to repeal the usury laws. It was most unaccountable, that gentlemen should think the bill would act against the landed interest. What was the situation of that interest at this moment? By law they were interdicted from paying more than 5 per cent interest for money; but the law was frequently evaded by resorting to the system of annuities—a system which had brought some of the noblest estates in this country into complete dilapidation. He supported this bill, because he thought, that so far from prejudicing the interests of the landed proprietors, it would be most advantageous to them. The policy of the measure was perfectly clear; and, as to its justice, why should any man be prevented from going into market with his commodity — for money was a commodity—and getting the highest price for it? Let his learned friend be permitted to bring in his bill, and he trusted that ministers would see good reason to carry it through, as one of their own regulations.

Mr. *R. Gordon* said, he must continue to oppose this bill. It had been said, that it was unusual to oppose the bringing in of a bill. So it might be, were it a new measure; but this was the identical bill which they had already, year after year, rejected. Why, therefore, allow their time to be further taken up with unavailing discussion? It was a waste of time to permit the preliminary stages of a bill, which they knew would, on the second reading, be rejected. If ministers chose to adopt the measure, and rest it on their own responsibility, then they ought to permit the bill to be brought in; but, when a private individual attempted to introduce it, it ought to be immediately resisted. An hon. member had adverted to the beneficial operation which the repeal would have on the condition of the country gentlemen. But it would be quite as well to allow the country gentlemen to judge for themselves, since they might naturally be supposed to be the best judges of their own interest.

Mr. *Wodehouse* was decidedly opposed to the bill, because he thought it impossible to calculate the effect which it might have upon the landed interest. His objection was, however, principally to the time of introducing the measure; and it was an additional instance of the reckless spirit of experiment which prevailed, and which had entailed already so much mischief on the community.

Colonel *Davies* said, he would suggest a mode by which the objections of the country gentlemen to the repeal of these laws might be obviated. If they were so enamoured of the usury laws, as to prefer granting annuities at a most extravagant rate, to the borrowing of money on reasonable terms, let a clause be introduced into the bill, excluding the country gentlemen from its operation. If they were so desirous of raising money on annuities, at 15 per cent, rather than borrow at a little more than 5 per cent, let them be permitted to do so.

Mr. *Monck* adverted to instances in which money might have been borrowed at little more than 5 per cent, but the law opposing this, the parties were reduced to the necessity of raising money by the sale of their goods, at a ruinously low rate. This would be a common occurrence, as long as these absurd laws remained upon the statute-book. He agreed, however, that the landed and trading portions of the community stood in different situations, and that the repeal of the usury laws might affect the one interest, in a different manner from that in which it would operate on the other. Money on mortgages was borrowed for a length of time; but a tradesman might want a loan for two months, and for that loan it might be worth his while to give a high consideration. The borrowers and lenders in these cases had different objects; and why should they have one measure for credit and security. If money could be raised at 5 per cent on the best landed security, how could those, who had only personal security to offer, expect to raise money

at the same rate? The present crisis had thrown considerable light on the subject, and had proved how much better it would have been for many unfortunate persons, if they had been permitted to borrow money at a little more than 5 per cent, instead of being obliged to sell their goods at a most ruinous loss. The state of the law was most extraordinary. It, in effect, said this, to those who were in want of money:—"You cannot be permitted, whatever your difficulties may be, to borrow money at more than 5 per cent, because any thing above that would be exorbitant, and bring you to ruin. But, you may borrow money, by the sale of your property, at any rate you please, however destructive." Such was the state of the law; and it was of great importance to the commercial portion of the community, that it should exist no longer.

Mr. *John Smith* said, that since the discussion of this bill last session, much light had been thrown upon the subject. The House was aware of the panic in the money market last December, and he could state, of his own personal knowledge, the enormous sum which had been paid for pecuniary loans. He knew an instance in which, for a very large sum, no less than 75 per cent had been paid. What good purpose could the usury laws serve, when, in spite of those laws, money was, in cases of necessity, raised at such an immoderate rate. He thought the learned serjeant deserved the thanks of the country for his perseverance in this most important measure.

Mr. *Wynn* gave his entire support to the proposed bill; and, in doing so, he felt that, instead of injuriously interfering with the landed interest, he was conferring a boon upon that body. He had known many instances of the bad effect of the usury laws, and particularly one about ten years ago, when a person, possessing a large landed property, had a mortgage which was standing for thirty years. The security was for 40,000*l.*, and 20,000*l.* had been paid off, when the remainder was called in. It was impossible, at the time, to get this sum at the usual rate of interest, and 9 per cent was obliged to be paid by annuity to take off the unredeemed mortgage. This annuity-interest continued for a considerable time, until money could be obtained under more favourable circumstances. When the committee sat upon the usury laws, they had before them several eminent solicitors, who concurred in opinion, that the landed interest would be benefitted by the change. A great deal had been said about the wisdom of our ancestors, and the authority of ancient statutes; but, let any one examine the state of the laws generally when such statutes were framed, and they would see that it was attempted at that time to regulate by law the price of every article of consumption. Nay, to such an extreme was this spirit of interference carried, that the lord chancellor had the power, even since the Restoration, of regulating the price of wine. Deeming it essential to the interests of the country generally, that these laws should undergo an alteration, he should give his cordial support to the measure.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that when government itself gave 6 or 7 per cent for money, it was not surprising if private individuals sometimes found it difficult to borrow at 5 per cent. With respect to the proposed bill, if ministers would take upon themselves the responsibility of supporting it, he would not oppose its introduction; but, if it was to be considered merely as the measure of an individual, teazing the House with the discussion, session after session, then he would undoubtedly oppose it *in limine*. An hon. member had stated, that he knew of transactions in the city, in which money had been borrowed at as high a rate as 75 per cent. Why, it was a common practice in the city to borrow money in that way, upon continuation. These were mere gambling transactions; and, if he were to state all that he knew about these matters, he could present a scene of gambling which must appal those who had paid no attention to such matters. But these gambling bargains had nothing to do with this bill. The passing of it would have no effect upon them whatever. Let the learned gentleman withdraw this bill, and introduce another, of which the operation would be confined to trade, excluding money lent on mortgage. Then, if the trading bill worked well, perhaps the landed interest would consent to participate in the experiment. The only result of such a bill as this would be, generally, to increase the rate of interest. They were for ever told of the terrible operation of annuities, and spendthrifts would still be found, even if this bill were passed, to fly to annuitants to satisfy their cravings; but the amount of annuities, as compared with mortgages, were small indeed; not

in a greater proportion than as forty to one. So that if they entertained the subject, they would be passing a law for the exception, and not for the rule. He was sorry the learned gentleman had not been made a judge during the vacation; for, if he had been removed out of that House, no other member could have been found to foster his bantling. At all events, he must deprecate the discussion of this important question, unless it was gravely taken up by ministers, and considered in a calm and dispassionate manner. The minds of the people were too full of the dangers which surrounded them, to be diverted from fitter considerations by the agitation of such a question as this. If such a bill were passed, was it likely that the Bank would permit the 1,200,000*l.* which they had now out at 4 per cent to remain at that rate of interest? The Bank proprietors would not allow the thing to remain, even if the directors were so inclined. Indeed, every man who had money out upon mortgage would, in such a case, recall it, and demand better terms. It was a very impolitic step to bring forward this measure, when money matters, so far as the interest of mortgages was concerned, were in a satisfactory state. Those who were really interested were perfectly satisfied with their present condition. Why, therefore, disturb it? Unless he heard that this measure was to have the sanction of ministers, he would take the sense of the House on the motion, if pressed. He hoped, however, that he should not be driven to this course, but that the learned serjeant would withdraw it.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that as he was not present at the commencement of the discussion, he was but imperfectly qualified, if qualified under any circumstances, to give an opinion upon the measure. That it was one which was entitled to serious consideration, he readily acknowledged; and all must feel that the manner in which it had been disposed of last session afforded no satisfactory proof of the sense of the House upon it. His right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, had been too much engaged on important matters connected with the state of the country, to allow him to give the subject that attention which it required. He hoped, therefore, that the learned gentleman would postpone the measure for a short period, in order to allow his right hon. friend time for its consideration. On the second reading of the bill, his right hon. friend would be prepared to give the House his views with respect to an alteration of these laws. No one, he apprehended, could have the least doubt as to the principle of the bill which the learned serjeant sought to amend; and he felt bound to say, that it was with him a very serious question, whether the operation of the usury laws had not contributed, in a most unfortunate degree, to increase the late distress.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that after what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman, he would withdraw his opposition to the introduction of the measure.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

BUBBLE ACT.] Mr. *Hobhouse* rose for the purpose of putting a question to the attorney-general. It was in the recollection of the House, that towards the close of the last session, the learned gentleman introduced a bill, which was subsequently passed, for the purpose of repealing the act commonly called the "Bubble Act." At that time it was intimated, that a measure would be introduced by a learned lord in the other House, which would strike at the root of fraudulent transactions in the formation of companies. The question which he wished to ask was, whether it was in the contemplation of his majesty's ministers, or the law officers of the Crown, to introduce any such measure in the present session? There was a very uneasy sensation on the subject of the fraudulent transactions of the last year, and fears were entertained that similar attempts might again be made. He, therefore, was anxious to know whether any measure would be introduced, by which, if the public did not receive indemnity for the past, they might at least have security for the future.

The *Attorney-General* said, he was not aware that any such measure was in contemplation, nor did he think it was at all necessary. As the law now stood, it was sufficient to reach any fraudulent attempts, by any number of persons forming themselves into illegal companies. If the fact of any fraudulent attempts could be proved against any individuals, the law as it stood, was sufficient to reach and punish them, without the aid of any new enactment.

EXCHEQUER BILLS.] The House having resolved itself into a committee of

ways and means, Mr. *Herries* moved, "That the sum of 3,500,000*l*., a part of the sum now remaining in the Exchequer, to complete the aids granted for the service of the years 1823, 1824, and 1825, be applied to the service of the year 1826."

Mr. *Hume* begged to ask, whether it was the intention of government to leave the Bank to make purchases of these Exchequer-bills, as they had hitherto done; and whether they were, at one time, by a great over-issue, and, at another, by restraining that issue, to put at hazard the property of Englishmen, whenever they thought fit? If men had been guilty of some of the mad speculations and improvident sacrifices attributed to them, let them take their fate; but let not the innocent be confounded with the guilty. It would require strong proofs to satisfy the minds of the public, that the Bank of England had not, by purchasing immense quantities of Exchequer-bills at one time, and issuing them out in equally immense quantities at another, aggravated the late unfortunate panic. He had strong objections to a power remaining in the hands of any set of men to raise and sink the market at their pleasure, from five to ten per cent. Every country banker, too, should be compelled, four times in the year, to furnish an account of all his issues in the preceding quarter. Such a proceeding would, in some measure, be a check upon the over-issue which had been the subject of complaint. They ought also to know the amount of all the Exchequer-bills which had been purchased by the Bank of England, that they might discover, if possible, the reason why Exchequer-bills had been, at one time, at from 35*s*. to 50*s*. discount.

Mr. *Maberly* thought there would be but little security to the holders of Exchequer-bills, until the public were made better acquainted with the nature of the Bank transactions with government, and with their dealing in those bills, than they were at present. There were instances in which the Bank had gone into the market and made purchases, so as to raise the value of those bills 20*s*. The Bank had a right to do so if they pleased, and they had also a right to withhold their proceedings from the public. But he trusted that the government and the Bank would see the necessity of relaxing on this point. They had of late acted in a most liberal manner; but they would deserve still more praise, if they consented to make their transactions more public than heretofore. This was necessary in consequence of their intimate connexion with government.

Mr. *Irving* alluded to the purchase of Exchequer-bills by the Bank, and contended that the directors were justified in those purchases. If the circulating medium was not sufficient for the wants of the country, no injury was done by the purchase of those bills. If it was too much, why should not the Bank sell? The object of mercantile men was to procure discounts for short periods, and it was of little consequence to them whether those discounts were afforded them from an issue of Exchequer-bills, or a deposit of bullion. If the Bank had the means of purchasing Exchequer-bills, he saw no reason why they should be prevented. The events which had taken place had, in many parts of the country, left the people without any means of barter. If government would send down 3 or 400,000*l*. to be distributed by skilful clerks, on good security, in the various provinces, it would, in his judgment, restore the deficiencies in the circulation, and relieve that class of the community who most required assistance.

Mr. *Bright* thought ministers should have directed more of their attention to the condition of the country in 1793. If they had compared it with the present, they would have seen that the two were nearly similar; they would also have seen that the remedy adopted by government at that period had had a considerable effect in relieving the distress. Why, then, should not they have recourse to the same means of averting the evil? If the issue of Exchequer-bills in 1793 had been productive of such beneficial effects, what was there to prevent a similar issue of them now from operating in the same way? The situation of the country was so peculiar, that it would afford an ample justification to government for deviating a little from any stern principle which they might have formed for the guidance of their proceedings on ordinary occasions. It was absolutely necessary that some plan should be devised for supplying the provinces with a circulating medium. If 300,000*l*. were dispersed in small sums, under the direction of skilful persons, through different parts of the country, it would, in his opinion, have a greater effect in relieving the present distress than any other measure which could be devised.

Mr. *Pearse* said, it was the duty of the Bank to be cautious how they interfered with prices; and, as to Exchequer-bills, they ought not to deal in them, unless there was a necessity; but, when that necessity arose, it was unbecoming the hon. member for Aberdeen to make repeated attacks on the Bank. These were times when men ought rather to endeavour to remove impressions which affected public confidence than encourage them. An advance of money must come sooner or later from the government, and the sooner the better. He was sorry that ministers had not been prevailed upon to listen to the application that had been made to them; for he was sure that sooner or later the assistance applied for must be granted.

Mr. *Hume* said, he had not blamed the Bank for what they had done. What he had complained of was, that the Bank had the power at will of raising the value of every man's property, by dealing in Exchequer-bills; and he had made the observation that the House might be able to ascertain the extent of the dealings of the Bank, and their effect on prices. It was no assertion of his, but a general opinion in the city, that, during the recent distress, the interference of the Bank in the money market had produced a very sensible effect; and, until the necessary infomation was laid before the House, he must abstain from giving praise where he was not sure it was due. Indeed, he feared there had been much irregularity in the dealings of the Bank. It had been very justly observed by the late director, Mr. Ricardo, that it was the duty of the Bank Directors to make the best bargain they could with the government for the proprietors. The evils caused by the fluctuation in the value of Exchequer-bills, should be ascribed to the government, and not to the Bank. If the government had no debt, there would be no need of Exchequer-bills. It was owing to this, that the right hon. gentleman, though he admitted the present disastrous situation of the country, did not dare to sanction the issuing of even 500,000*l.* worth of Exchequer-bills for the purpose of relieving it, lest the exchanges should be thereby turned against us. Had the sinking fund been applied in buying up Exchequer-bills, the evils which had arisen from the fluctuations in their value could never have occurred. What those evils must have been he would eave to hon. gentlemen to figure to themselves, when he reminded them that these bills had, in the course of a very few days, been reduced from sixty-five shillings premium to four guineas discount. In his opinion, the resolution adopted by this House the other evening was calculated to increase the present distress, by causing a considerable portion of the circulating medium to be withdrawn.

Mr. *Irving* said, he should wish to know, if Exchequer-bills were not issued, how the Bank of England were to give a sufficient supply of notes? Perhaps it would be answered, by discounting mercantile bills; but it was not at all times that these discounts were required. In December and January last there was a considerable portion of mercantile bills presented to the Bank to be discounted; but of late there had been so little trade, that, comparatively speaking, few discounts were wanted. In his opinion, the buying and selling of stock contributed much more to the fluctuations in the value of property than any traffic in Exchequer-bills. He considered that the best and most convenient issue of the Bank rested on Exchequer-bills. They afforded a much more regular and certain channel through which Bank issues might be supplied than any other. He was sorry that ministers had treated so lightly the application which had been made to them; for ultimately they would be compelled to have recourse to the measure suggested. The salvation of the country depended upon it. It had been urged, that the refusal was necessary to check further speculations. This, in the present situation of the country, was an objection too frivolous to require an answer.

Mr. *Maberly* was of opinion, that if any plan was attempted for relieving the present distress which should cause the exchanges to turn against us, the distress would be very considerably aggravated. The government were placed in a very difficult situation. It must be recollected that they had already a debt of 30,000,000*l.* in an unfunded state. In his opinion, the Bank might accommodate the merchants by discounts at a longer date than usual, upon having goods deposited as a security. They might readily get a bill passed for enabling them to do this.

Mr. *Hume* said, that when it was considered that the Bank had 18,000,000*l.* locked up in the hands of government, it could not be expected that they could afford that accommodation to the public



which it would otherwise have been in their power to have afforded. Government having absorbed all their capital, the Bank had only their profits, wherewith they could grant discounts to the merchants. What was the amount of those profits was kept a mystery. No such secrecy prevailed in the affairs of any other public bank. There was no such mystery as to the affairs of the banks of France and America. The amount of the weekly discounts at the Bank should be known to the public. He did not mean to blame the Bank. If they were apprehensive that the exchanges were likely to be turned against this country by an extensive issue, under present circumstances, they had acted right in contracting their discounts.

Mr. *C. Grant* said, he was astonished to hear an hon. member declare that the ministers had treated this momentous subject with levity. There was one consolation in the midst of all their difficulties, namely, that even the gentlemen who habitually opposed the government, had done justice to the feelings of his right hon. friend the chancellor of the Exchequer; and he was persuaded that no man, who investigated the subject dispassionately, could doubt, that, if the government had acted erroneously, it at least proceeded from a strong desire to render that assistance which their feelings prompted them to render, but which their public station prevented them from carrying into execution. They were assailed on all sides by devices and projects for relieving the public distresses. The hon. member for Bristol had said, that the ministers ought not to adhere to principles; but he could assure that hon. member, that if ministers had hearkened to the various counsels offered them, there was nothing in principles or morals from which they must not depart, or a single principle of policy which they must not have subverted. With respect to the effect of issuing Exchequer-bills, it appeared to him to be of little importance to the public how the Bank notes found their way into the market, so that they secured an adequate circulating medium.

Mr. *T. Wilson* was of opinion, that an issue of Exchequer-bills by government, would have proved more beneficial than any relief which could be granted by the Bank. It had been observed, that the Bank should be liberal in their discounts; but the parties to whom the Bank were in the habit of granting discounts, were not the persons who stood most in need of assistance. The persons wanting relief were those who dealt in goods. In his opinion, the issue of Exchequer-bills by government, instead of causing such bills to be at a discount, would have a directly contrary effect. It would tend materially to restore confidence, the loss of which had been one of the principal causes of the present distress; and it would tranquillize the minds of numerous individuals, who would not be afraid of parting with their money, when they knew that they could have assistance if they required it.

Mr. *Hutchinson* was desirous that justice should be done to all parties, and particularly to the government, for their conduct in the recent transactions. Though there might be a difference of opinion as to the merits of many of the measures proposed by government, he thought that there could be no difference of opinion upon this point — that ministers had evinced every anxiety to administer relief to the existing distress. He was of opinion, that from their past conduct the country might be confident that ministers would set their shoulders to the wheel to rescue the country from its present unfortunate situation. He thought, however, that the system of Government was too expensive, and that it was the duty of parliament to make them diminish it.

Sir *F. Blake* commended the conduct of government. Their principles of free trade particularly entitled them to the thanks of the country, and he hoped they would not, by any complaints or representations, be induced to depart from them.

Mr. *Herries* said, that one observation had fallen from an hon. friend of his, which he felt it necessary to notice. His hon. friend had stated, that the government had received lightly the representations of distress which had been made to it. Now, he was sure that no solicitations had ever been received with greater attention than those which had recently been made to government; and if the noble lord at the head of the Treasury, and the chancellor of the Exchequer had not complied with the requests made to them, it was not without giving to them a full and patient examination, nor without being convinced that they ought not, for public reasons, to be acceded to. His hon. friend had given it as his opinion, that the large purchase of Exchequer-bills, which had taken place

that morning, would have produced a greater effect, if it had been a measure of the government, instead of a measure of the Bank. Now, the hon. member ought to have known, from what had fallen from his right hon. friend last night, that the measure was one which the Bank would never have felt itself justified in undertaking, if it had not been for the communication which his right hon. friend had made last night. He trusted, therefore, that his hon. friend would admit that the government had met his views in this respect.

The resolution was agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, February 16.

CHURCH RATES IN IRELAND.] Sir *John Newport* rose, in pursuance of notice, to propose a series of resolutions regarding the levy of Church-rates in Ireland. It was in the recollection of the House, that he had last year called their attention to the manner in which the Irish parochial rates were collected, and to the abuses which, in every part of their details, were so apparent. Having been on that occasion so fortunate as to obtain almost the unanimous assent of the House to the bill which he had introduced, he was afterwards much surprised to find, that, in another House, the principal clauses were struck out which regulated the adequate control of the local expenditure. It was doubly incumbent upon the House to guard the Irish public from the abuses of this system, seeing that a considerable portion of the persons who had to pay these church rates, were by law excluded from taking any part in the proceedings of the vestries where they were levied. Besides this, many of these rates were imposed, not only without the authority of law, but in direct defiance of it; for instance, salaries were augmented contrary to the statutory provisions, which controlled and limited their amount in the most specific manner. The object of this bill was to provide, that when any parishioner had just reason to complain of the injustice and inequality of the rate levied upon him, he was not to be left, as he now was, without a remedy, but was to have the power of appeal to the next quarter sessions. This redress was easy and simple, as well as quite analogous to the practice in similar cases; but the clause which embodied this provision was struck out of the bill elsewhere, and the principal benefit intended by the measure was thus rendered a nullity. In order that the House might be aware of the manner in which the power of raising sums for the uses of religion was diverted from its legitimate purposes, he would state a few examples of the abuses which prevailed on this subject. The law had expressly provided a particular sum for the salary of parish clerk. Where his attendance was only required one day in the week, his remuneration was not to exceed 10*l*. a-year. Now, it would be found, that in two-thirds of the parishes throughout Ireland, 20*l*. or 30*l*. was the salary paid the clerk, and often much higher sums. Every species of extravagant expenditure attended these rates. In one parish, 430*l*. was paid to build a house for the parish clerk and sexton. No parish in England would have tolerated so scandalous an exaction. And yet this was done in Ireland, where the great bulk of the people not being of the established church, could not take the least part in the vestries, which taxed them so highly for services, in the benefits of which they never participated. In some parishes places were contrived which ought never to have been sanctioned. There was, for instance, the organist's attendant, and the tuner of the organ. In others, there were people anxious to promote the Hibernian Bible Society, and in Raphoe they voted 10*l*. for this purpose; and this was to come out of the pockets of the Catholic peasantry, for the use of a society avowedly established for proselytizing purposes. In one place, a tax was made to repair the bishop's throne, to provide a clothes-horse for his closet, and brushes, and indeed every article for the toilette of a finished gentleman. In one parish in Dublin, a sum of one hundred guineas was voted out of the rates, to purchase a piece of plate for the curate. Fifty pounds was also voted to the parish clerk, and the same to the vestry clerk; which was more than double the amount authorized by law. In one parish, in the course of ten years, the organist had received more than 850*l*. The bellows-blower had 10*l*. a-year; and there was a vestry-maid at 20*l*., besides three servants to attend the church. In one of the returns there was this remarkable nota bene; "No access to the church or church-yard, for man or horse, but by climbing over two or three ditches or walls." From this, it appeared that access to the church was not considered material;

so that the money was levied, the object in view was attained. In many instances, palpable modes were taken to evade the law which limited the amount of salary to the clerk; he was first paid for his clerkship 20*l.*, then they gave him twenty guineas for singing, thirty guineas for instructing the boys, twenty guineas for teaching the girls, and twenty guineas more for extra services. So that the salary was raised to 120*l.* and 140*l.* a year. Then, large sums were required for the use of pews. In one instance, a lady had paid 14*l.* or 15*l.*, and in another seven guineas. Last year he had offered a remedy for the correction of these abuses; namely, the power of appeal to the quarter sessions; but that had been rejected. He understood that government meant to bring forward some corrective; if so, he should gladly leave the matter in their hands. It was but justice to some parties to state, that in two or three parishes, so sensible were respectable members of the established church of the injustice of taxing the Catholic population in this way, that they defrayed themselves the salary of the clerk. In some parishes, the rector and his incumbent were considerate enough to defray the charge of the sacramental bread and wine, instead of taxing their Catholic parishioners for such a purpose. The right hon. baronet concluded, by moving, 1st. "That from the detailed returns of parochial assessments imposed during ten years past in Ireland, as laid before the House, it appears that large sums of money are annually levied for purposes, in many instances, not warranted by law, and for paying salaries to officers at rates exceeding the limits prescribed by statutary regulation: 2nd. That these and other considerable abuses appear to prevail in the imposition and application of such parochial assessments, in consequence of the absolute want of adequate control to secure their limitation within proper bounds, and their appropriation to definite and legitimate objects: 3rd. That it becomes the duty of the legislature to make efficacious provision for the easy attainment of such control, and against the recurrence of such abuses, particularly as a large proportion of the persons who are subjected to payment of these parochial levies are at present by law excluded from voting in vestries held for the imposition of many of these assessments."

Lord *Althorp* was anxious, before the subject was further discussed, to obtain some information from the right hon. gentleman opposite, respecting the intended measures of the government touching Ireland. It was stated in the King's Speech, that measures were under consideration, arising out of the inquiry which had been conducted last session into the state of Ireland. He wished to know what those measures were. They might be good, or they might be bad. At all events, no opinion could be formed of them until their nature was stated. He hoped the right hon. gentleman would give some information upon this point.

Mr. *Goulburn* professed his readiness to give the information required by the noble lord, before he made any observations upon the motion of the right hon. baronet. He would state generally the measures which his majesty's ministers intended to introduce in the course of the present session, arising out of the labours of last year's committee; and he would state them in the order of their notice by the committee. With respect to the mode of collecting tithes, it was not their intention to submit any distinct proposition; and for this reason—that the Tithe-composition bill had been, within the last year, brought into general operation in Ireland, and had produced effects not merely equal, but far surpassing his most sanguine anticipations. It was, therefore, intended to allow that measure to work on its due course, and remedy existing evils, and not to interfere with it, by any new measure. A year ago there had been effected only 259 tithe compositions; but, since the last session, he was happy to say, the number had increased to 676; being about one-fourth of all the parishes in the sister kingdom. The benefits of this measure were not confined to the parishes in which it was brought into action, but extended to their vicinity, and led to the extension of amicable compositions. One fact would show strongly the operation of the bill. The assistant barrister for the county of Cork had informed him that the business of his court had declined one-half, owing to the absence of tithe causes. The next measure in order, but he would revert to it last, was the mode of collecting and applying the church rates, and the constitution of vestries. Then followed the constitution and proceedings of the manorial courts. This subject had been under the consideration of the lord lieutenant, and a measure was about to be introduced, to correct the practices of

these courts, and obviate their abuses. The next matter was the legal right of admission to the freedom of corporations; and he meant to propose a measure to remove the delays which at present occurred in establishing these corporate rights. Respecting the laws which related to grand juries, and the manner of levying their presentments, he could not say that he was prepared with any remedial measure; at the same time it was to be understood, that the attention of the Irish government had not been withdrawn from the subject. But the magnitude of the question, the difficulties with which it was beset, and the long period of existence of the present practice, rendered it difficult to grapple with the subject; and he thought it much better not to tamper with it, until some main principle could be devised, which was likely to act upon all the bearings of so important a subject. He was not, therefore, prepared with any measure on this point. He would now advert to the other topics on which it was intended to introduce legislative measures. The one was, that of landlord and tenant, on which it was his intention to submit, in an amended form, the bill which he had introduced last session. As to the church rates, the chief object of the Irish government was to ascertain what the law was, and to collect and consolidate the whole of the acts on this subject into one, and in that one to introduce clauses for the removal of many of the grievances complained of. It had been his wish that this measure should have been introduced at an earlier period; but the pressure of other important affairs had rendered it necessary to postpone it. Upon the principle of the return proposed by the right hon. baronet, there was no difference. The difference was as to the time. He did not mean to defend the abuses in the local returns respecting church rates; but, in looking at the irregular charges made in vestries, it would be found, that they were not all bearing against the Roman Catholics. On the contrary, many of those charges were for building, or assisting to build, Roman Catholic chapels, and for other purposes connected with the Catholics; which showed that, though many of the items of these assessments were irregular, they were not voted with any feeling hostile to the Roman Catholics. He would agree that the assessments in future should be limited. He intended to introduce a bill on this subject in a short time; and, as the right hon. baronet did not seem disposed to withdraw his motion, he would move, as an amendment to it, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to consolidate and amend the laws which regulate the levy and application of Church Rates in Ireland."

Sir *R. H. Inglis* began by stating that, the right hon. baronet had, in substance, produced the same cases, and repeated the same charges, which he brought forwards last session against the general system of the administration of the church-rates in Ireland. Though, at that time, he could not help doubting the inferences, he was not then prepared to deny, or even to explain, the facts upon which the right hon. baronet raised them. Since that period, he had examined the returns before the House; even now, however, he would not follow the right hon. baronet in all the details of the cases which he had brought forward; but, before he sat down, he would, with the indulgence of the House, call their attention to some of them. He would begin, indeed, in the first place, by admitting, that there were considerable irregularities, perhaps even a violation of the law in its strict letter, in the expenditure of the church-rates in Ireland; but this admission would not benefit the argument of the right hon. baronet, if the nature of the irregularities in question were regarded. He would quote from the documents on the table of the House, and particularly from the returns of the northern and more Protestant dioceses; he would begin with Derry, and, in that diocese, with the parish of Moville; there in one year the cess was 46*l.*, and of that sum 10*l.* was appropriated to the Roman Catholic chapel, 10*l.* to the Presbyterian meeting-house, the repairs of the church for that year being only 2*l.* The first item had been continued at the same rate for five more years, so that for six years a levy raised by law for the support of the Protestant church was applied for the benefit of another communion. He did not quote this to blame it, or for any other purpose than to show that all the irregularities in the expenditure of this fund were not for the benefit of the Protestants exclusively, to the injury of their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. He could not help thinking that if the right hon. baronet had quoted a few such cases both last year and this night, the impression of his speech would not have been less, though the tendency of it

would have been infinitely more salutary. It would then have tended to conciliate the minds of the people, instead of increasing the irritation which the discussion of this question in the other way would produce.—The hon. baronet proceeded to quote several other cases from the northern dioceses, where, if any where, Protestantism, being predominant, might be expected to be intolerant. The parish of Lower Fahan, out of a cess of 51*l.* had applied 26*l.* to a Roman Catholic chapel, and in a subsequent year 33*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* out of a cess of 101*l.*. He certainly did not mean to defend the legality of all the items of the expenditure; for instance, in the parish of Ballynascreen, there was an item for killing foxes, a curious item for a church rate; but this, after being continued for some years, was superseded by a grant of 22*l.* 15*s.* for a Roman Catholic chapel. In the parish of Balteagh, out of a cess of 14*l.* 5*s.* there was an item of 3*l.* to the Roman Catholic parish priest for books, for the use of his Sunday-school. Were these proofs of the grasping, bigoted, and exclusive spirit of the Protestant priesthood and Protestant population? He could go on with such cases much longer than he could venture to trespass on the patience of the House. He could show in many ways the truly Catholic spirit in which this fund was administered. In the parish of Lower Langfield, there were these items:—Towards repairing meeting-house, 5*l.*; To assist a poor Roman Catholic whose house had been burnt by accident, 10*l.* In another parish, Kilmacrennan, out of a cess of 89*l.* 3*s.*, 30*l.* was given to the Roman Catholic chapel, and 30*l.* to the Presbyterian meeting-house. Were these cases, which, if they had occurred to the right hon. baronet, and had been stated by him, would have made the kind of impression which his speech was calculated to make; and yet the impression would, he ventured to think, have been more salutary. To the system of administering the church rates in Ireland, which the right hon. baronet on a former occasion described as corrupt and profligate, and which had been brought forwards in the Roman Catholic association as one of the great grievances of Ireland, the right hon. baronet stated last year, that there was one very honourable exception. He mentioned the name of a noble lord, a large proprietor in Ireland, who had relieved the parish rates towards building a church, by giving 50*l.* to that object. It was to be regretted, that the right hon. baronet had not found in those returns another name which might be seen there, that of lord Cremorne, who had given six times as much.—On this part of the subject he would not dwell longer; he would quote only one extract to prove the harmony in which the Protestant and Roman Catholics lived, when they were suffered to be quiet, and not perpetually told of the grounds on which they ought to quarrel; it was taken from the return of the parish of Clontibrel; and was signed by a name, among the highest not only in Ireland, not only in the united empire, but in Europe, as a man of science—Brinkley. It stated that he, as rector, had attended all the vestries, except one or two, for twelve years: that the numbers had been generally from 60 to 100 or more; Roman Catholics attend as well as Protestants; but there had been no reckoning of votes, because difference of opinion never existed. If such passages as these had been brought forward by the right hon. baronet, there would have been before the House sufficient proof of the cordial sympathy and mutual good-will subsisting between the members of different communions when they were left to themselves. The next objection to the distribution of the rate, was the amount of it. The highest amount which he had ever seen was 1*s.* 5*d.* per acre. This was in one single case. In no other instance (he did not pretend to have examined all the returns) did it exceed 8*d.* per acre. The very first upon which he opened, was one farthing per acre: the next from 3½*d.* to 7*d.* Was this a burthen too grievous to be borne? Was this such an imposition upon the tenantry of Ireland, that it required the interference of the imperial parliament? In the next place, when considering the amount of the legal levy of the church-rate, let it be recollected that, when the Roman Catholic peasantry were oppressed by a church rate, it did not follow that it was imposed by any but their own priesthood. He had read the papers of the rev. Mr. Morissy, a parish priest, who, though he had quarrelled with his bishop, was not therefore an incompetent witness; for there were certificates to his character in the strongest terms, as to his being exemplary as a priest, and in moral conduct, signed by a royal college physician, three royal college surgeons, as well as by three protestant rec-

tors, a colonel, and many others. This priest states, that he remonstrated against a rate of 6s. an acre, afterwards 12s. an acre, levied on his Roman Catholic flock for building a chapel. Now, at the same time, it appears by the returns before the House, that the cess by law for the church rate of the same parish was only 1½d. Which was the grievance of the people, the rate of 1½d. or the rate of 6s, or 12s.? Among the cases brought forward by the right hon. baronet to which, in opening, he had referred, there was one which he had only slightly noticed on this occasion, but on which he had debated before; and which had been made the subject of profligate levity in another place; he meant the expenses of the consecrated elements; but the delicacy of this subject was such, that, unless it should be introduced more at large, he would only say, that he was prepared to meet, and in a degree, if not entirely, explain the cases to which the right hon. baronet referred. The right hon. baronet had complained, that his bill had been deprived of all its virtue in the other House of parliament; and he seemed to wonder what possible objection could be found to a remedy so simple, as that which he had proposed, namely, submitting the control of the expenditure of the church rates to the quarter sessions. Now this was the vital part of the right hon. baronet's bill, and to which the strongest objections might reasonably be applied. It took from the existing authority, which was not only Protestant, but hierarchically Protestant, the control and expenditure of monies raised for the support of the ecclesiastical establishments of the country, and placed it in hands, which might be Roman Catholic, which might be Latitudinarian. If the bill of his right hon. friend, the secretary for Ireland, should contain any such provision, he feared (and he said it with the greatest regret) it would not be in his power to support it. The details of the items which had been mentioned were trivial; but the inferences drawn from them were not trivial. He considered that the inferences drawn by the right hon. baronet's measure would degrade the church establishment, and weaken its claims to the respect and affectionate gratitude of the people; and such measures, at all times, and in every place, he would resist.

Sir *H. Parnell* adverted to the reformation which had been made, under the present Irish government, with respect to the magistracy. Though he did not disapprove of that reformation as far as it went, yet it might be carried further. He had, in a former session, thrown out a suggestion, which, if adopted, would have a good effect in Ireland. He meant, that of appointing lords-lieutenant of counties, in the same manner as they were appointed in England. This suggestion had met the approval of the late lord Londonderry; but nothing had been since done with respect to it. The evidence before the committee of last year went to prove, that great abuses existed in the appointment of corporation magistrates, and he hoped that some regulations would be made on this subject. He understood that some improvement was intended with respect to the office of sub-sheriff, by the appointment of an officer in each county, to whom was to be intrusted the service of writs. This, he thought, would be a dangerous innovation; and he hoped the House would pause before they adopted any measure interfering with the duties of so old an office as that of sheriff. He was glad to hear that some amendment was intended in the laws respecting landlord and tenant, and he hoped that the amendment would remove the evil of sub-letting, and also the system of levying distress, and of ejectment, in which great abuses existed. There were some other points on which he thought the interference of the legislature would be a great benefit to Ireland; but as he did not know what course it was proposed to adopt with respect to them, he should be glad of information from the Attorney-general for Ireland. He should wish to know, whether it was intended to extend to that country, the provisions of the bill passed last session for the regulation of juries. That bill was a most excellent measure, and he did not see why Ireland should not have the benefit of it. He wished also to know, whether the bankrupt laws, as they existed in this country, were to be made applicable to Ireland? The trade of the two countries was now placed on the same footing, and he thought the same system might be made applicable to both. There were also some acts of George 2nd on the subject of banking, the repeal of which would be considered of service to Ireland.

Mr. *Plunkett* said, he was disposed to give the right hon. baronet every information in his power. With respect to the bankrupt laws, he had consulted with the courts in Ireland, with the Lord

Chancellor, and the Master of the Rolls there, and the result was, a conviction that it would be inexpedient to apply the bankrupt laws, as they now existed in this country, to Ireland. As to the bill for regulating juries in this country, which had been introduced in the last session, and the introduction of which had done so much credit to his right hon. friend (Mr. Peel), he thought it would not be expedient to make it applicable to Ireland. It would be sufficient to say, that the basis of that bill consisted of returns of jurors made by overseers of the poor and churchwardens. Now, in Ireland they had no overseers of the poor, and he hoped they would long continue without them; and, as to the returns made by churchwardens, he thought the hon. baronet himself would not like to see returns of jurors made by men holding an office from which Roman Catholics were excluded. There were other parts of the bill which would be inapplicable to Ireland. It would therefore be better to watch the operation of the bill here, and then see what part of it could be made applicable to Ireland. On the subject of the reforms made in the magistracy, the hon. baronet had not suggested any thing, nor was any new measure in the contemplation of the Irish government. Since that reformation had been made, he had not heard any complaints on the subject; which, on inquiry, proved to be well-founded. There was one complaint made of the conduct of a learned lord in whose department the appointment of magistrates rested, that he had neglected to attend to a very serious charge against a magistrate; that charge, it was said, was, that the magistrate had been guilty of most oppressive and illegal conduct — that the names of the parties were given, but that no inquiry was made, and that the magistrate was continued in the commission. Now, the facts of the case were, that an inquiry had been instituted into the conduct of the magistrate, and that the whole charge, from beginning to end, was altogether without foundation. He had selected this one instance for the purpose of showing the light ground on which charges respecting the magistracy of Ireland were put forth. He would also take that opportunity of informing the hon. baronet, that he had at present under his consideration a bill for extending to Ireland some of the material provisions contained in the very valuable act for amending the bankrupt laws of England, which was passed last session. It would, of course, require considerable alterations to render it applicable to Ireland; but, after it had been modified, he had no doubt that it would be found serviceable in that country. He was preparing a bill relating to the law of landlord and tenant in Ireland, similar to the excellent bill which prevailed in England on the like subject, and which bill would, he conceived, remedy several abuses, and especially the one of double distress. In his opinion, the returns which had been read by the hon. member for Dundalk, clearly proved that there was no want of liberality on the part of the Protestants of Ireland towards the Catholics of that country. He conceived, therefore, that the only purpose which the right hon. baronet could answer by pressing his present resolution, would be that of evincing anger for the past, and not of effecting a remedy for the future. The right hon. baronet's complaint was not as to the amount of the rates which were levied, but as to the manner in which they were levied; but it should be recollected, that if any rates were illegally levied, there was a proper tribunal in that country to which an appeal might be addressed for a remedy, if the application were made in due time.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, he wished to make a few observations on that part of the right hon. and learned gentleman's speech wherein he informed the House that he purposed conferring a great boon on Ireland, by extending the statute recently passed for amending the bankrupt laws here to that country. Now, he did not mean to say that that statute might not contain some useful provisions, but he believed those who praised it most were the members of the profession to which he had the honour to belong, and who had most profited by it. It had also been much lauded, and for a similar reason by the commissioners of bankrupts; but he felt it his duty to say, that he considered this enactment much more calculated to cause useless expense than to promote the interests of those who might have the misfortune to come under its operation; indeed he was somewhat surprised that no notice had as yet been given of bringing in a bill to remedy the defects which had been found to exist in that statute. He did not consider the objection which had been raised by the right hon. and learned gentleman to in-

troducing the jury-bill into Ireland; namely, that there were no overseers of the poor in that country, at all tenable, for there was no necessity that this measure should be carried into effect in Ireland in precisely the same way that it was carried into effect in England. There could be no objection to conferring on Ireland what was good in that measure, though it might have to flow through other channels.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that the learned gentleman laboured under a mistake in supposing that his right hon. friend, the Attorney-general for Ireland, had expressed an opinion, that it was impossible to introduce into Ireland a measure of a similar tendency to that which he had the honour of submitting to parliament last session. Nothing would give him more pain than to find that that measure could not be applied to Ireland. Even something more beneficial might be done, than merely to consolidate the laws. Since he had entered the House, he had received from an hon. friend near him a remonstrance as to the operation of the bill, which gave him much satisfaction. His hon. friend had complained, that, such was the unfortunate operation of the measure, he had been actually summoned to serve on two special juries. Now, he was rejoiced to find, that in the working of this bill, all men, without distinction, were compelled to perform their duties to the public; and in this summons he found some information which might be usefully applied to Ireland; namely, that the parties would be fined for non-attendance, unless they made a reasonable excuse, and that the judges would be in court at ten o'clock. It would be well that the bill for Ireland should not follow too closely on the heels of the other; for, in the connecting of a bill which repealed seventy or eighty acts, imperfections would creep in, which, perhaps, one or two assizes would point out. The hon. baronet opposite had made some allusions to the appointment of lords lieutenants to counties in Ireland. Nothing, certainly, could be better in principle, than that there should be gradations between the chief magistrate and the most subordinate authorities. But then the amount of the benefit must depend on the manner in which the duties of the office should be executed. It might be made the greatest curse in individual counties; and he feared it would not be easy to find resident lords lieutenant in Ireland; for the parliament being here, those who would be fitted for the office, must necessarily spend the greater portion of the year in this country. In the course of the session he meant to introduce a bill for the purpose of consolidating the laws of both countries, with respect to theft. With respect to the general question, if the right hon. baronet wished to record his own opinions, of course it was competent for him to place the resolutions on the Journals; but it was rather an unusual course, when a bill was about to be introduced, to propose resolutions to the same effect.

Mr. *Grattan* was of opinion, that the statement of the Attorney-general for Ireland had been quite gratifying, and hoped the resolution would be withdrawn. There had certainly been some most extraordinary instances of abuse. The evil was one of great magnitude, and the cause of its continuance was the want of some active resident individuals, who would expose abuses when they were committed. What would be most advantageous for Ireland would be, to devise some plan for the education of the peasantry. He had last session had the honour of proposing a measure for this purpose to the House, and he had been happy to hear a noble lord in the other House approve of that measure. Hon. gentlemen ought to be friendly to any plan which went to render the lower classes in Ireland more intelligent, and thereby prevent their emigrating in such numbers to this country, as to create a serious addition to the poor-rates.

Mr. *Plunkett* disclaimed the idea of having said, that there was any inclination on his part not to extend the provisions of the jury-bill to Ireland, when a fit opportunity should arise. All he had said was, that the machinery of the bill, in its present state, was inapplicable to Ireland; but that, when experience had proved its utility, he should rejoice to see it adopted.

Mr. *Hutchinson* quite concurred with his hon. friend, that the attention of members ought to be directed to the condition of the poor of Ireland. He, of course, did not mean to suggest any plan—certainly not the poor laws of England, at least not as they were abused. Such was the condition of the peasantry of Ireland, in the south and western parts, as to call for the immediate attention of parliament. He had witnessed a greater degree of misery and

degradation there, than he hoped, for the sake of humanity, existed in any other portion of the world. His right hon. friend, the member for Waterford, had done so many acts to entitle him to the lasting gratitude of his countrymen, that it would be useless to repeat them. Much of the benefits of the measures in progression and promise, were attributable to the indefatigable exertions of his right hon. friend; and he now proposed this resolution with a view to record his opinions on the subject. The condition of the country was such as to excite the deepest affliction. He would put it to the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, whether he slept on a bed of roses, when they saw events taking place every day tending to convulse the empire; when the duke of Wellington had departed for Russia, on a mission which no one could tell how it might terminate? Suppose the autocrat should turn a deaf ear to the arguments of that illustrious personage; or any other event should occur to break the peace of Europe, could the ministers, in such case, feel so secure as to say to foreign powers, "Do what you please, we are invulnerable?" If, in addition to our pecuniary difficulties, we had also the discontents of Ireland to allay, how fearfully would our dangers be increased! He was unwilling to break the harmony of the House, but it was his duty to speak out; and he would say, that the ministers would not discharge their duty unless they consolidated all the interests of the empire, and extended their excellent plans to every corner of it.

Mr. *Monck* said, that every person examined on the subject of the poor-laws, as applied to Ireland, was favourable to the experiment. Mr. Nimmo had stated to the committee, that there were a million mendicants and sturdy beggars, who were wandering over the country, and who, when unable to obtain a living by the offerings of charity or the plunder they continued to carry off in their lawless wanderings, resorted to their poorer but more industrious relatives, and extorted from them a portion of their hard earnings. Great objections had been made to the introduction of the poor-laws into Ireland, from the evils they had led to in this country. But, whatever those evils might be, they had not originated so much in the system of the laws as from the mode in which they were administered. What had been the state of the poor in this country previous to the reign of Elizabeth? They at that period were much in the same condition in which they now were in Ireland—sturdy beggars, wandering over the country, plundering when they could, and when they could not plunder, living on their more industrious relatives. It was only by a good system of poor-laws that mendicity could be put down in Ireland. There were no other means of preserving the peace of the country, and of producing, in the lawless hordes that wandered about as mendicants and beggars, habits of order and industry.

Mr. *R. Martin* said, he would give his cordial assent to the proposition of the Attorney-general for Ireland; and he had no doubt that the measure he announced would prove as beneficial as any which that learned person had conferred on Ireland. His assent to the introduction of the bill, however, by no means prevented his voting for the proposition of the right hon. baronet. He gave entire credit to the statements laid before the House by that right hon. baronet; and could confidently declare, that nothing would be more likely to create great dissatisfaction in Ireland than a rejection of the resolutions. They were, indeed, so closely connected with the measure of the Attorney-general for Ireland, that they might almost form the preamble of his bill. He did not think it advisable to introduce the poor-rates into Ireland, but he thought something ought to be done for the poor of that country, and that no person was so fit for introducing a measure of relief as the son of the lamented Henry Grattan, who used to say, that "every naked man was an armed host."

Sir *John Newport* in reply, observed, that his object was to get the resolutions placed on the Journals. Within the last few years, he had over and over again been opposed on various questions by ministers; and, though his recommendation had been slighted, or wholly disregarded, yet, by getting his resolutions placed on the Journals, he had often had the satisfaction of seeing measures which had been contemptuously rejected in one year, adopted the very next. With the hope of a similar result, he would now press his motion. He denied the imputations thrown out against him by the hon. member for Dundalk, of either acting from sinister motives, or of having selected particular cases. He had no hostility to the Established Church; his ob-

ject was, to befriend and support it, by removing those evils which warred against its security. He never could, however, agree to place the sole control of the church rates in the hands of the hierarchy, without subjecting them to the interference of other portions of the community; and he was happy to hear that there was no intention of introducing any bill to that effect.

Sir *R. Inglis* explained. His objections had reference to an attempt of some persons to place the control of the church-rate in a lay tribunal.

The resolutions were negatived without a division; and the amendment agreed to.

TOLLS AND CUSTOMS AT FAIRS AND MARKETS IN IRELAND.] Mr. *Spring Rice*, after a few observations respecting the evils to which the present system of collecting Tolls and Customs in Ireland gave rise, moved for the purpose of remedying those evils, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, praying that he would be graciously pleased to give directions that a commission should issue to inquire into the Tolls and Customs collected in Fairs, Markets, and Sea Ports in Ireland."

Mr. *Goulburn* said, that the hon. gentleman was under a misapprehension as to an intention on the part of government to protect or support any abuses in the collection of the tolls or customs of Ireland. On the contrary, if extensive evils did exist, and he would not deny that there were some, government would be disposed to remedy them. Indeed, he had assured the hon. gentleman, at the commencement of the session, when he was apprized of his intention to make this motion, that the subject had not escaped the notice of the Irish government, and that he was unwilling to preclude any inquiry that might lead to practical benefit. At the same time, the subject was surrounded with difficulty. There were in Ireland, as there were in this country, many markets and towns invested by royal prerogative, with a right of levying certain tolls and duties. Now, that was a right with which the legislature ought to be cautious in interfering. Wherever duties, even moderate duties, were levied, it could not be denied, that those duties operated as a tax upon the commodities of whatever town or market these commodities were brought into to be disposed of. So far they were, therefore, a restraint upon those principles of free trade which the House was so desirous to encourage. But this restraint did not operate upon those duties in Ireland alone; it operated with equal effect in this part of the united kingdom. Within half a mile of the very place in which they sat—at Covent Garden—the tolls and duties exacted there were a subject of constant altercation, between the persons who brought their commodities for sale into that market, and the duke of Bedford. The effect of these disputes were felt particularly by the lower classes of the people, who brought their commodities to market, and, as far as they went, were an obstruction to the traffic of the place. But, it did not follow that there was no redress for any evil which might arise. It was true, that a committee of the House had, on a former occasion, pointed out this subject as one for which a remedy ought to be found; and the ground of that recommendation was chiefly on account of the resistance which was offered to the payment of tolls, and the disorders to which that resistance gave rise. He could not, however, agree, that this was a sufficient ground for applying the remedy now proposed. If this resistance were confined in Ireland to the payment of tolls, then, indeed, some argument might be raised upon it; but, when it was found to prevail very generally, and when the same resistance was offered to the payment of rents and of tithes, and all other dues which parties were entitled to receive, and the same disorders were the consequence, he thought it was too much to conclude, that the law was therefore deficient. His own opinion was, that by application to the legal remedies, and by that alone, the evil could be got rid of. If gentlemen, resident in the neighbourhood of places where tolls were illegally exacted, would lend their advice and assistance to the persons aggrieved, by pointing out the mode of legally obtaining redress; and, if need were, by leading the way themselves, and making an example of some great offender, there would soon be an end of the illegalities complained of, and the existing laws would be found strong enough for all necessary purposes. The greatest facility was afforded, under the present acts, to persons who had to complain. The redress might be obtained before a single justice of the peace; and, although corporation officers were, in many instances,

the parties interested in the receipt of tolls, this difficulty, too, had been provided for, as well by the imposition of a heavy pecuniary fine on justices denying redress, or refusing to act, as by an enactment, that all causes relating to corporation rights should be sued out of the jurisdiction. But, if the motion of his hon. friend were agreed to, it would afford no further information than was already on the table of the House, in the list of fees taken in all the towns in Ireland, by any other authority than that of the justices of the peace. By that return, it appeared, that there were no less than 2,000 patents granting tolls, and that in each of them the articles amounted to fifty or sixty. It was obvious, therefore, that, to investigate this subject properly, the commissioners ought to ascertain, item by item, the legality of those tolls, and to point out accurately whether they were received by the authority of prescription, of patent, or by the peculiar fitness of the thing. The annual amount of these tolls; were said to be 1,000,500*l.* It would be necessary to give compensation to the parties at present entitled to these tolls, and he, for one, would never consent to the government making any bargain so extensive as this must necessarily be. For this reason, as well as on account of the herculean labour which must be imposed on the commissioners without the probable result of any adequate good, he must decidedly oppose the motion. There was another ground, and not a less forcible one, on which that opposition was founded. If this motion were agreed to, the immediate consequence would be, that the people of Ireland would receive it as evidence that Parliament had decided on the general illegality of tolls, and there would not be a market or fair in which the people would not set up a general resistance, even to that part which might be admitted to be legal. He had lived long enough in that country to know how easily erroneous opinions were adopted, when they happened to suit the notions of persons who were interested in them. For these reasons, and, above all, because there was already in Ireland a disposition to lay aside the law, and to resort to extraordinary measures—he was averse to the commission. Nothing could produce a more lasting benefit to that country, than to exalt the legal tribunals in the minds of the people, and to teach them to look to them alone for protection and redress. He was not disposed to resort to any extraordinary remedy; but, if the present law was found inefficient, he would, upon the case being made out, consent to its being remedied.

Mr. *Denis Browne* remarked, that the proposed inquiry would last for ever, if they examined every man who paid toll in Ireland, as a custom was placed on all articles sold at fairs. He did not think that there was any ground of complaint, as the matter was managed very regularly, the toll-levier being obliged to furnish receipts for the tolls he took. If he was guilty of exaction, the subject might be investigated at the sessions, where the patent was rigorously examined; and there was also an appeal from the sessions to the judge in circuit. He had observed that commissions of inquiry into Irish matters were very excellent things. If there was to be one appointed on the present occasion, he was sure it would be a never-ending one. He had had forty-three years' experience, and he therefore hoped that he should be made one of the commissioners, being very sure that it would turn out to be a very good thing. The tolls of Ireland were a disease, but a cure was often worse than the disease itself. Gentlemen might judge of the expense of such a commission, when they reflected on the expenses of the witnesses who had come from Ireland to give their evidence before the committee into the state of Ireland. He had lived long enough to hear of many such commissions. He had heard when each of them had begun, but he seldom heard when they ended. They were generally very snug things. He should like to be appointed to one; and he hoped he had put in his claim in time [a laugh].

Sir *H. Parnell* said, it was to very little purpose that any legal remedy existed in Ireland against the exactions of the customs gatherers, as the poor could not resort to it, for obvious reasons, and the poor were the only sufferers by such exactions. He remembered an instance at Maryborough, where a double illegality had been practised; in the first place, the article taxed was exempted from toll; and in the second, the party levying the tax had no authority to do so. In Ireland, unfortunately, there was no "village Hampden" to step forward and obtain redress for the injured peasant. What was most provoking of all, however, was, that the money derived from tolls was not

misapplied [a laugh]. In most other cases, the object in obtaining money improperly was to apply it improperly; but here he must acknowledge that it was honestly applied.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that the hon. mover had not produced a single instance in which the laws, when put into operation, had failed to effect the desired remedy. If he had even done this, it would have amounted to a good ground for making some alteration in the law; but it would not amount to a reason for appointing a commission. The labours of such a commission would be infinite. Surely the hon. mover's ideas could never go to the extent of imagining, that a compensation should be given to persons for the value of the tolls which he wished to regulate or suppress. If that principle were adopted, it ought also to be applied to this country. If a commission were appointed for Ireland, it ought also to extend its labours to England; for an equal ground of investigation extended to both countries. The extent of the present proposition went to this absurd length, that this country was to be taxed for removing that evil from Ireland which was to be continued upon herself. If a commission were to be appointed for Ireland, he did not see why the inquiry ought not to be extended to the duke of Bedford's tolls in Covent-Garden. Every possible facility ought to be given to inquire into the legality of the tolls exacted, and to resist the imposition of them, if illegal. If the statutes were defective, they might be improved; but he could not consent to supersede the ordinary operation of the law, by the appointment of a commission, the duties of which would be endless.

Sir *J. Newport* said, that the present state of the law was inadequate to afford redress to those whom it was meant to protect. Who were the parties in the present question? Who were the oppressed, and what the condition of the oppressor? The toll rights were in the hands either of corporate bodies, or of rich and powerful individuals. To tell the poor of Ireland that, to obtain redress, it was necessary for them to enter into a legal contest with corporate bodies, or with wealthy individuals, was to tell them, that they had no remedy at all. The cost of contest would be ruinous to the peasant; but it would be contemptible to the other party. He knew cases in Ireland where illegal impositions were enforced upon the poor, by corporations that abandoned them when resisted by the rich. He would instance the case of general Burke, who had successfully opposed a claim which, after his resistance, continued to be imposed on the peasantry. The heavier the exaction, the less chance had the poor of successful resistance; for the richer would be the oppressor. The parties who had to determine appeals against oppression in one district, were generally the practisers of similar oppression in neighbouring districts; and it might be supposed to which side their sympathies would tend. It was the duty of government to afford to the poor a summary and cheap remedy. How lax they were in the performance of their duty, might be gathered from a statement of the practice existing upon the subject in Ireland. It was the practice for the toll-collectors of the Irish markets to stand at the entrance of the market-place, with a huge bludgeon in one hand, and a prayer-book in the other. He imposed the oath upon the vender of the goods in a summary way; and, if he met with resistance, he took the law into his own hands, and the bludgeon became his instrument of vengeance. What could be said of a government that permitted the continuance of such practices as these? Sir John Davies had declared, very many years ago, that the people of Ireland were well disposed, and inclined to obey the laws, whenever they were equitable. But, could the peasantry of any country respect laws of the description of many of those now existing in that country?

Mr. *Plunkett* wished briefly to explain to the House, the nature and degree of the resistance which he meant to offer to the hon. mover. Whether that hon. gentleman's opinions of the extent of the evil, were well founded, he had great reasons to doubt. From his official situation, all complaints, if they were material, would naturally meet his ear; but the complaints which had been made that evening to the House, had previously been unknown to him. If the tolls levied in the Irish markets were, as had been stated, so excessive as to amount to 5 per cent on the articles sold, it would amount, not only to a grievous tax upon the poor, but to a most mischievous imposition on the country gentlemen, out of whose pockets this money must eventually come; and, for their own sakes, they would never tamely do it. He did not believe the statements as to the extent of

the imposition; but, supposing they were true, by the hon. mover's own confession, there were documents before the House sufficiently ample for him to make out his case. Where, then, was the necessity for a commission of inquiry? The hon. mover had not made out any case for inquiry; but, if his other statements were true, he had undoubtedly made out a case for legislation. If the hon. gentleman would come forward with a measure upon the subject, he would cordially co-operate with him. More: if the evil could be removed, he was ready to take upon himself the labour of remedying it. The labours of a commission would be endless. The number of toll franchises in Ireland amounted to 2,016, and each of them involved a right to about twenty different kinds of toll. The commissioners, therefore, would have upwards of 40,000 cases to investigate. It would be the work of generations—"filii natorum, et qui nascentur ab illis." He must again express his conviction, that the charges were too general, and made on too light grounds. The people would not submit to them. Gray's

"Village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his field withstood,"

would not, perhaps, strictly apply to Ireland. But, if that country was without village Hampdens, she was in no want of legal Hampdens. The latter were a description of persons who were not likely to acquiesce under the implication of any grievance, and to whom the expense of procuring redress would not form a very important objection. If the hon. mover could suggest any plan for rendering the mode of granting redress more summary, he would endeavour to carry it into effect. It was suggested, that the patents for tolls in Ireland should be purchased by the public. At the lowest estimate, the tolls in Ireland were worth 500,000*l.* a-year. Now parliament could not think of offering the gentlemen who held the patents less than twenty years' purchase, which would amount to the moderate sum of 10,000,000*l.* He thought that his right hon. friends, the chancellor of the Exchequer and the president of the Board of Trade, would turn the matter in their minds a long time, before they resolved to part with such a sum for such a purpose. Then, as to England, which would have an equal right to bring hers to market, they would take—but, he was getting beyond his depth, and would leave the calculation to his right hon. friend the chancellor of the Exchequer. He repeated, that he was willing to legislate with his hon. friend, but he objected to the inquiry. He could assure him that he had, in the course of his office, met with no cases of the kind mentioned, or he would have dealt with them as they deserved.

Mr. *M. Fitzgerald* agreed, that the consideration of buying up these tolls would be stopped in limine by the immense amount of the purchase money. If the Attorney-general for Ireland were really so ignorant as he stated himself to be, of the evils complained of, it only proved that the poverty and misery of the poor Irish were so extreme, that their grievances had not reached the government. The impositions complained of, were levied in despite of the statute and common law. He had never been in any town of Ireland, in which he had not heard of numerous instances of oppression, committed in open and insolent violation of the law. He begged to deprecate the remedy proposed by his right hon. friend, who found the existing laws sufficient, and recommended recourse being had to the attorney of the hamlet. There was nothing he deprecated more than this. He would rather leave the people subject to the toll, than put them into the hands of the attorney. Too many of the evils of Ireland arose from the injudicious advice which gentlemen of that profession gave to both sides. His countrymen, much as they loved litigation, had discretion enough never to go to law with corporate bodies and toll-gatherers. The remedy at law, of which so much had been said, was not available to the people. He knew cases in which tolls were levied, contrary to law. There were laws to exempt linen from every species of toll; and the trustees of the linen board knew that in the south and west of Ireland tolls were levied on articles employed in the manufacture of linen. What was worse still, the power of levying tolls was exercised to promote frauds. It had been proved before him, as a magistrate, that a toll gatherer asserting his right to examine articles, had, under the influence of a bribe, allowed bad articles to pass, and thus assisted to impose on the public. This instance of flagrant abuse shewed how incompetent individuals must be to resist improper charges. The extent of the grievance, and the impossibility of

at present obtaining a remedy, required that the law should be simplified, and that means should be devised for supplying those who were oppressed, with funds for obtaining justice by the ordinary proceedings at law. Perhaps such funds might be supplied by the grand juries; and, if suits were prosecuted on this principle, the distinction would be established between illegal and legal tolls. It was worse than idle to tell the House, that men in a more wretched situation than the paupers of England, could obtain a remedy against any oppression practised by the wealthy. He trusted, that if his hon. friend felt a conviction of the existence of abuses, that he would submit the matter to a committee. It was not at all to be wondered at that the Secretary, or his right hon. friend, the Attorney-general for Ireland, should remain ignorant of such abuses, even though they existed. So multifarious were the subjects to which their minds were necessarily directed; that he was not surprised, if such comparatively trifling matters as abuses in the collection of tolls had not been brought under their observation. The right hon. gentleman professsed himself quite ignorant of such abuses in Ireland. Indeed he never recollected a secretary that knew much about the country; and, as for an Attorney-general attending to such trifles, it was not to be expected. He could not know much of the country. Indeed he never knew a great lawyer to know much of any country in the world [a laugh]. However he was greatly disposed to place reliance on the disposition of the secretary for Ireland, and his right hon. friend the Attorney-general, to have justice done to the poor. It must go a great way towards removing the abuses complained of.

Sir *John Brydges* denied, that there was in Ireland one law for the rich and another for the poor. Such a statement going forth to the public uncontradicted, would do a great deal of mischief.

Sir *John Newport* explained. He did not say that there was one law for the rich and another for the poor; but he had said, that when the law was so expensive that its remedies could not be obtained by the poor, it was the same as if the law had no existence. There was not one law for the rich and another for the poor; but in practice, though not in statutory regulation, the poor could not avail themselves of the law.

Mr. *R. Martin* felt himself called upon to declare, that in the county which he represented, atrocious abuses prevailed in the collection of tolls. It was a general subject of complaint. They were gross in the town of Tuam; but in the town of Galway itself, they were greatest of all. There never was any thing equal to the atrocity of the abuses there in the mode of collecting tolls. In proof of this statement, he might appeal to his colleague (Mr. Daly). The abuses, too, were carried on by the corporation. These abuses existed to such a degree, that the value of land was reduced 3*s.* or 4*s.* an acre, in consequence of the exorbitant exaction of tolls. He might appeal also to his colleague, that the redress of those grievances was not a very easy matter. His hon. colleague had been defendant in a suit in chancery, instituted against the corporation of the town for the levy of tolls. That suit had been in chancery for many years, so that redress was not so easy a matter as was supposed. Still he was disposed to concur in what had been said by the Attorney-general for Ireland, that there was by law, an effectual remedy against such abuses. To be sure, the law was quite open to every person. Like the London tavern, every person might enter who could pay the expense. Was the London tavern open to paupers? They must have money in their pockets, or they would have no business there. It was the same with the law. People must be able to pay for it, or they could not enjoy the luxury of litigation. If the Attorney-general for Ireland should direct the solicitor for the Crown to prosecute when such abuses took place, it would do much good; and, as he undertook to do so, it might be better to rest satisfied with this assurance, than to proceed to an inquiry, which must necessarily take up a great deal of time. He did not hesitate to say, that the exorbitant exaction of tolls in Ireland, was one of the greatest abuses that existed. In the case to which he had alluded, after a tedious suit in chancery, a decree was given in favour of those who opposed the toll, as being illegally exacted.

Mr. *Daly* said, that with regard to what had fallen from the last speaker, respecting the corporation of Galway, he was ready to give it the most decided contradiction.

Mr. *Martin*. Do you?

Mr. *Daly*. I do. I give it the most decided contradiction. The tolls are collected in Galway according to the strict letter of the law. The hon. gentleman says that I was defendant in a Chancery suit.

Mr. *Martin*. I do say so.

The *Speaker*. I trust the hon. member will not place me a second time in the disagreeable situation of calling him to order.

Mr. *Martin*. I humbly and most penitentially ask pardon of you, Sir, if I am out of order. To the House I am ready to offer the most humble apology.

Mr. *Daly* proceeded. It had been said that he was defendant in a suit in Chancery, in which an illegal exaction of tolls was the question to be tried. It was not true. [A cry of "Order."] He begged pardon: he meant merely to say, that the statement was not correct, without intending any thing unparliamentary. He had, indeed, been made defendant in a suit, for the purpose of putting him to expense; but upon his making affidavit that he never, directly or indirectly, received a penny of the tolls that were the subject of litigation, he was discharged by the court from any further connection with the proceedings. This was not the first or second time he had been brought before the House in a similar manner. He could stand up in his place, and defy the hon. gentleman, or the world, to say that he ever received one farthing of the public money in any way. He could have no interest in the collection of tolls in Galway. He had, at present, a suit depending in Chancery, to determine whether he was free of the corporation or not; but with respect to an illegal exaction of tolls, he would stake his character that there was no such thing. Tolls, no doubt, were collected; but it was done according to law. The assistant barrister of Galway was a man of the highest honour, and was incapable of deciding in a way inconsistent with justice; and the right might be tried for a few shillings. How was it, then, that complaints of this nature did not come before the sessions? He did not mean to deny that the thing was a grievance; but, as long as the law permitted it, the toll would very naturally be taken.

Mr. *Martin* said, he put it to the House, whether he had charged the hon. member with receiving money. He had merely said, that illegal tolls were taken at Galway; and he said it without intending to give offence to any man. He said likewise that the tolls were improperly applied; but he did not charge the hon. member with misappropriating them.

Mr. Spring Rice then withdrew his motion, with an understanding, that a select committee would be acceded to, with limited powers, to ascertain whether any and what remedy can be applied to the existing evils, without trenching upon private rights.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Friday, February 17.

Bank Charter Amendment Bill.] The order of the day being read,

The Earl of *Liverpool* rose, pursuant to notice, to move the second reading of the bill entitled "An act for the better regulating copartnerships of certain bankers in England, and for amending an act, passed in the 39th and 40th years of the reign of his late majesty king George 3rd, entitled an act for establishing an agreement with the governor and company of the Bank of England," &c. He believed it would be most convenient for the discussion to call their lordships' attention to the different branches of the subject, in order fully to explain the measures which his majesty's government had thought it right to adopt under the present circumstances. He was well aware of the difficulties opposed to any measure of remedy which could be suggested. At the same time he could not help thinking that, if their lordships were disposed to look the difficulties fairly in the face, they would become less than they might at first sight appear to be. A noble lord opposite, had, on a former occasion, referred to what he had thought it right to say in the course of last session, on the subject of the speculations which were then going on. What he had then said, showed that the causes of the present evils were not unforeseen. It had been said, however, that he had not pointed out all the sources of the delusion, and that in particular he had not said any thing of the country banks. Now, he would refer to the recollection of those who heard him at the time, as well as to those floating records, which, though loose and hastily made, would be found substantially correct, for an account of what he had said at that time. It would be found, that upon that occasion he had gone even out of his way, to give notice to the persons embarked in

the wild speculations, of the hazard they were incurring. He had then observed, that one of the reasons of his mentioning the subject was, that those speculations were not confined to the metropolis, where people might easily know what they were worth, but that they were extended through the country by the agency of the country banks. Government had received intelligence of this, and numerous individuals knew of it as well as government. When he referred to this declaration, he did it out of no view of laying claim to any prophetic spirit, beyond that possessed by any other noble lord, who had directed his attention to questions of that nature. Their lordships must say, when they recollected the numerous speculations of the last year, the mining speculations, the loans to foreign countries, the various extravagant projects which were on foot, that it was impossible but, sooner or later, a powerful reaction must take place.

In discussing the proposed measures, he should first endeavour to ascertain the causes of the present distress. And he had no difficulty in stating, that he agreed with those who had ascribed the principal part of the evil to those extraordinary and extravagant speculations which were afloat in this country during the last year, and which undoubtedly had their origin in the then great prosperity of the country. Their lordships would recollect the speculations of that period. The foreign loans, the mining associations, the joint-stock companies, had come to such an extent, that a noble lord, then in his place, and a noble and learned friend of his, not then on the woolsack, had thought it right to devise measures to obstruct the passage of these projects through parliament. Their objects were plain to every man, and made him feel for the dangers to which the unwary were exposed. The spirit of adventure—the spirit of gambling and speculation—was pushed to an extent never exceeded at any period of the history of this country since the celebrated South-sea bubble. This spirit of adventure and speculation was not confined to these new objects of speculation, but extended itself to all the branches of legitimate and ordinary trade. Their lordships had lately heard a great deal of the danger of giving freedom to trade, and much of the evils had been ascribed by some persons to those acts of parliament, by which some branches of trade had been liberated; but, the greatest speculation had taken place in those articles, the trade in which had always been free. Their lordships had ordered some returns of the imports and exports of certain articles of commerce and raw materials to be laid on their table. They had called for these papers that they might compare the speculations and the trade of different years. These accounts were made up of the average of the three years before the last, in order to compare the extent of the trade in that year with the three preceding years; and a fairer comparison could not be made, because those three years, and more particularly the last two of them, were years of great commercial prosperity. He would enumerate some of the principal. In the years 1822, 1823, and 1824, the imports of sheep-wool amounted to 20,341,076lb. In the last year, the amount of the same imports was 38,703,682lb., being an increase of 90 per cent. In cotton wool, for the same period, the average imports amounted to 161,206,751lbs., while, in 1825, it amounted to 222,457,616lbs., being an increase of 38 per cent. The next article to which he would call their lordships' attention was indigo, the imports of which had risen from 5,077,878lb. in the three years, to 7,530,534lb. to which they amounted last year, and which was an increase of 48 per cent. The loads of square timber imported in the three years preceding the last, were 551,496. In the last year they amounted to 664,186, which was an increase of 20 per cent. Of deals, 41,102 cwts. were imported in the three years; in the last year the imports were 58,605 cwts., making an increase of 42 per cent. He would now draw their lordships' attention to silk—that article of which so much had been said. It appeared from accounts on the table, that speculation had been no less active in this article than in others. The imports of thrown silk, which were the three years preceding the last, on an average 404,423lbs., had risen to 800,501lbs., being an increase of 98 per cent. A similar comparison with respect to raw silk showed an increase of from 2,608,527lbs. to 3,431,172lbs. which was an increase of 31 per cent. The imports of wine, tallow, and several other articles, into the details of which he would not enter, had risen nearly in a similar proportion. Every branch of trade had thus been extended to a degree unparalleled in this country. Such had been the spirit of enterprise,

not only with respect to gambling and joint-stock companies, but also to speculations in trade, that it was beyond possibility, that a great re-action should not follow.

Having stated thus much with regard to over-trading, he would proceed to speak of the currency, and to shew its connection with the present state of things. He knew there were different theories upon the subject. Some persons attributed all the evils to speculation, while others attributed them all to the currency. That they did not flow exclusively from the currency, he thought he had already shewn; but he did not think that all these speculations and gambling transactions could have been carried to the degree they had been carried, if they had not been aided by the paper currency. Both causes had operated. The speculations in trade had been the origin of the evil; the spirit of gambling carried into every branch of trade had been the beginning, but it could not have been so extensive if it had not been aided by the state of the currency. Let their lordships see how the question stood with regard to the currency. That question also divided itself into two branches—the notes of the Bank of England, and the notes of the country banks. Accounts had been laid on their lordships' table of the number of Bank of England notes in circulation since 1819, and they led to this observation, that in 1821, in 1822, during the whole of 1823, and during one-half of the year 1824, there was no reason whatever to infer any over-issue of Bank of England notes. Even in 1823, the exchanges were in our favour through the whole of that year, though the Bank had made additions to its issues. During that year, and up to August and September, 1824, the exchanges were in favour of this country. He rested much on this circumstance; for he was one of those who agreed in the opinion, that the state of the exchanges was an infallible guide on this subject, if properly attended to. He knew this point had been disputed by some able persons; but he thought they were in error, by taking up wrong ideas in the outset, which they could not afterwards get rid of. He had looked at their writings; and was still of opinion, that the state of the exchanges was an infallible medium for regulating the circulation. Up to the month of August, and even up to September, 1824, the state of the exchanges was in our favour; but then they took an unfavourable turn. On this indication, the Bank should have decreased its issues; but it had not—it had increased those issues. It must, however, be said, in fairness towards the Bank, that they soon saw their error, for so early as March, 1825, they perceived the necessity of drawing in, and between the months of February and May, a reduction in their issues had taken place to the amount of 1,300,000*l.*, while from May to August the diminution was 700,000*l.* more; and, by the month of November, 1825, the Bank had contracted its issues to the amount of three millions and a half. Although, therefore, he was ready to admit, that the Bank did not, in the first instance, use due precaution in the contraction of its issues, he must, at the same time, do that body the justice to say, that they did not lose much time in reducing their circulation.

Let their lordships next consider what was the state of the currency as regarded the issues of the country bankers. And here he wished, once for all, to say, as some seemed to suppose he had a dislike to country bankers, that he disclaimed all intention of casting any imputation on the country bankers generally. Amongst them he knew there were many as wealthy, as well established, as respectable, and as solvent, as any bankers in the great city in which he was speaking. His observations were all directed against the general system, and did not refer to any individuals. Let their lordships, then, look to the state of the country-bank circulation during the period when the issues of the Bank of England had been brought under their notice. In the years 1821, 1822, and 1823, the country-bank circulation continued, as far as that could be known from the number of stamps issued (which he admitted, might not be exactly correct), on the average, to be somewhat more than 4,000,000*l.* Stamps to that amount had been annually issued, and no considerable increase had taken place until the year 1824; but, in 1824, the number issued had been increased from four to six millions; in 1825, it had been further increased from six to eight millions; so that, between 1824 and 1826, this species of circulation had been actually doubled. This was a most material fact, and proved the continuance of the increased issues of the country banks, after the Bank of England had contracted

its issues to a very considerable amount. When the Bank had been doing every thing in its power to warn the country, and had reduced its issues three millions and a half, the country bankers had, at that very time, increased the amount of their issues. In comparing the accounts of the issues of the Bank of England with the issues of the country banks, it would be seen, that the Bank of England had begun, in February and March, 1825, to reduce its circulation, and it was then somewhat more than twenty millions. Between May and August it was reduced to 19,600,000*l*., and in November it was down to 17,980,000*l*., making in the whole a diminution of three millions and a half. But, in the year 1825, the issue of country-bank notes was, in the first quarter, 2,151,774*l*; in the second quarter, 2,506,539*l*; in the third quarter, 2,155,754*l*., and in the fourth quarter, 1,941,242*l*. Thus, the notes stamped for the country banks exceeded, in 1825, by a considerable amount, the average amount of former years. Whatever reduction of the paper circulation was effected by the Bank of England, was more than made up by the issues of the country banks.

Having established this fact, he would ask their lordships, if it was too much for him to say, that the spirit of adventure and speculation, the gambling in joint-stock companies and mining associations, in loans, and the other extravagant projects, which he had before alluded to, had been fomented and encouraged by the facilities afforded by the over-issues of the country banks; and that the failure of these speculations, necessarily involving that of those who had afforded them accommodation, was one of the main causes of the distress of the country? For where did the distress begin? The first failure which took place was that of a great House in the West of England. The second, that of a London banking-house, connected with not less than forty of the country banks. The third great stoppage was that of a large banking establishment in Yorkshire. Thus, therefore, although the run was not altogether confined to the country banks, and it was impossible when once the panic had diffused itself abroad that it should be so, still it would, he believed, be acknowledged that the run was mostly upon the country banks, and that when it extended itself to London, it fell with the greatest fury upon the establishments most connected with the country-bank circulation.

Was it, then, too much to ask their lordships' assistance in putting down so crying an evil? It had, he knew, been said by some noble lords, as well as out of doors, that the measures proposed were premature, and that we ought to wait for more convenient and quieter times. But that was an assertion, the futility of which would, he was confident, be obvious to all those who knew human nature, and who had seen as much of the world as he had done. They knew that the hour of distress was the best time for the application of a remedy; and that, under such circumstances, it would be received with much less clamour, and be far more likely to produce a salutary effect, than during a period of prosperity.

Acting under these impressions, his majesty's government had suggested two remedies; one having for its object the gradual withdrawing of the one and two pound notes out of circulation; and the second, that which it had become his duty to propose that evening, for their lordships' adoption. Before he proceeded, however, to the second of those measures, he thought it right to state the grounds upon which he supported the first, and to obviate, if possible, the objections which he had heard urged against it; that measure was not yet before their lordships; but, from the votes of the other House of parliament, they knew that it was in progress, and that it was likely to come soon under their consideration. The first objection to the measure was one which could not be denied, and undoubtedly, as far as it went, he must admit its force. He could not deny that the withdrawing the one and two pound notes, in order to the substitution of a metallic currency, would operate as a considerable check on the supply of circulation which trade might require, and that, in this way, the distress would be generally felt; but their lordships must see the necessity of adopting this measure after the statements which he had just made. They must have observed, that the country might be left in a state of perfect delusion; that the country banks might go on increasing their paper circulation, while the Bank of England, aware of the state of the exchanges, were taking measures to reduce their issues. Now, if the circulation of the one and two pound notes were replaced by a metallic currency, this could not be the case. But there was another consideration of serious im-

portance. If the country was to be exposed to a crisis of this nature—and in a great commercial country crisises of such a kind were to be expected—it was necessary to provide against the evil consequences of this description of circulation to the poorer classes. Let their lordships consider what were the consequences of the failure of a country bank to a labourer. The poor man could not refuse a one-pound bank-note, and he could not retain it in order to recover its value at another time, as others might do, for he must expend it in supplying his weekly and his daily wants. Then let any one of your lordships reflect upon the consequences produced, under these circumstances, by the failure of a great bank in a country town, which bank had been supposed to be perfectly solvent; and, be it remembered, that no less than seventy or eighty of these banks had suspended payment during the late panic. Only let the House conceive for a moment to what a lamentable situation the poor inhabitants of that town must have been reduced by such an event! All they had been able to save from their hard earnings for years past were probably lodged in that bank; and even the very last payment of wages which they had received had been made in these worthless bits of paper; and, consequently, many of them were seen hawking them about for sale, and offering them for 5s. in the pound, to enable them to purchase the common necessaries for the support of life. Now that was a situation of things which never could take place in a country in which a metallic currency alone existed.

And this observation brought him to the next question; namely, the difficulties in the way of arriving at the substitution of a metallic for a paper currency. A noble lord opposite had rested his objection to the measure proposed by his majesty's government for the sanction of the legislature, on the difficulties which would attend the substitution of a metallic currency. Now he would beg leave, in the first place, to call the attention of the noble lord, and the attention of those other individuals who made that objection, to the actual situation of the country, which they seemed to have forgotten. In this great metropolis and its neighbourhood, a metallic currency alone was in circulation. The same observation applied to the county of Lancaster, one of the most populous districts in England. Liverpool contained a population of 150,000 souls; Manchester 200,000 souls; and the population of the district altogether was not less than two millions; yet, in those populous towns, and throughout that whole district, there existed no other than a metallic currency. This, if the population of the metropolis and the towns in its neighbourhood were added, it would be found, that with respect to four millions of the inhabitants of the country, who might be fairly taken as the representatives of at least two-thirds of its wealth and respectability, the objection of the noble lord did not apply. Where, then, he asked with confidence, was the difficulty of extending to all parts of the country, a circulation which existed in full force in London and its dependencies, and in Lancashire, Liverpool, and Manchester, and their dependencies? There could be no difficulty in continuing it where it was already established; and the argument which had been advanced, that a paper circulation was more commodious for the purposes of commerce, was answered by the fact, that in London, and the places he had already alluded to, where there was tenfold the amount of business, there was no paper circulation. In Manchester, an attempt had been once made to establish a paper circulation; but it failed entirely; for the inhabitants had, he was happy to say, the good sense to reject the attempt, satisfied to remain as they were. Their lordships, therefore, had the benefit of experience with respect to these wealthy and populous parts of the country; and if they looked, likewise, to those accounts which were already on their table, and to those which would be placed there, they would be convinced that there was no serious difficulty to be apprehended. Their lordships pretty well knew what the circulation of 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes had been, and what they might have been, had there been no coin in the country. During the suspension of cash payments, parliament had regular returns of the amount of one and two pound Bank of England notes circulated in the country; and that circulation was found to have amounted to nearly seven millions. He would now take that sum, and add to it the amount of the circulation of those of the country banks. He was aware that, to get at this, they were under the necessity of taking their data from the number of stamps issued by the Stamp-office for that purpose; and, according to these, he was sure he did not under-rate

them, he was certain he over-rated them, at 6,000,000*l.* or 7,000,000*l.* at the utmost. Putting these two sums together, then, they would give a circulation of one and two pound notes of 13,000,000*l.* or 14,000,000*l.* He knew that 6,000,000*l.* of country notes went beyond the mark as the amount of an average year; but, taking it at this extravagant rate, he would suppose them to have to provide for the substitution of a paper currency of 13,000,000*l.* or 14,000,000*l.* Now, by the official accounts laid before their lordships, they knew that, during the period from the year 1819 to the year 1826, the Mint had coined in sovereigns and half sovereigns, more than twenty-five millions sterling, of which in one year—namely, the year 1821—they had issued no less than 9,500,000*l.* From that sum of 25,000,000*l.* their lordships would have to deduct the amount of the gold that had been exported from the kingdom; and this was to be ascertained through the medium of the Customs; although it could not be done formerly, because then, absurdly enough, it was contrary to law to export the coin of the country, but now it might be lawfully exported. From the accounts furnished by the Custom-house, it appeared that the quantity of gold exported from this country since the year 1819, amounted to 7,269,000*l.* During that period, as he had before stated, 25,000,000*l.* of gold coin had issued from the Mint, which deducting the 7,000,000*l.* exported through the Custom-house, left 18,000,000*l.* But, in addition to that which passed through the Custom-house, he was aware that considerable quantities left the country through other channels—as, for instance, those sums paid to smugglers for contraband goods; and the money which the passengers on board vessels might have in their pockets. Taking, therefore, the sum of 7,000,000*l.*, which had been lawfully exported in the regular way, and adding to it the sum of 3,000,000*l.* more as the amount of the rest—and this was a most extravagant calculation—their lordships would have to deduct 10,000,000*l.*, as the amount of coin exported, from the 25,000,000*l.* issued by the Mint, and there would be 15,000,000*l.* as the amount now remaining in the country. Then they all knew that, since the month of November, in the last year, upwards of a million had been re-imported. So that, according to this calculation, there could not be in the country at the present moment, less than sixteen millions of gold coin, to fill the place of the small note currency. Besides, circumstances had occurred which had partly anticipated, and thereby considerably facilitated, the proposed alteration. Their lordships might remember the alarm which had been created in the country some time ago, by the circumstance of a banker in Bristol refusing to pay his notes in gold; and this having been acted upon in other places, the alarm soon spread throughout the kingdom; and the consequence was, that it threw a considerable quantity of gold into the country. Now, therefore, looking at the amount of the paper in circulation,—looking at the amount of the coin issued by the Mint since the year 1819, and at the result of the calculation which he had made—he did not entertain the remotest doubt that there was quite a sufficient quantity of coin in the country to meet the measure proposed by his majesty's government of substituting a gold for a paper circulation. They did not mean, however, that the paper currency should be withdrawn at once. It was to be done gradually, in the course of the ensuing three years; so that the country notes would still continue to circulate until (supposing even that there were not enough of coin in the country to supply their place) a sufficient quantity could be procured. However, looking at the example of Lancashire and London, all the difficulties on the subject completely vanished. Why did gold circulate there? Because they had no paper currency. Why was there no gold in other places? Because they had a paper currency. No fact had been more clearly established by all experience on the subject than this—that gold and paper never could be brought to circulate together. No paper would circulate where gold did; and no gold where paper circulated. There could be no common issues of both. This, he repeated, was clearly proved by all experience.

These were the grounds on which he submitted his first measure to the consideration of the House. It was proposed, as the means of making the evils more equally felt, whenever an unfavourable state of the exchanges took place, by which the great mass of the people would be protected from its effects. But then it would be said, "That measure of itself will be inadequate; you ought to go further; that is doing a good deal,

but it is not doing enough." But, though he preferred a metallic to a paper-currency in small transactions, still he admitted, that a system of banking, established on sound principles, was attended with convenience, and even benefit, to a country. The measure, however, which he had to propose on this subject, he granted, was but a half-measure. And why was it so? Because their lordships would recollect, they had the chartered rights of the Bank of England to contend with. This was an obstacle to their going further at present. They ought to go further whenever they could; but the question now was, were their lordships, although they could not go as far as they wished at present, to go as far as they could? He was surprised to hear it objected to, on no other ground than that it was calculated to do too little good. But surely, if it would do some good, and could do no harm, that was a groundless objection. The present system of law, as to banks in this country, he considered to be one of the most absurd that ever was invented. It was in the teeth of all sound policy or common sense. It had grown up gradually, and was not the result of any original plan or system. He could easily conceive one of two systems founded upon reason and good policy, which might be adopted by banks. For instance, let them have a system of liberty, permitting any number of partners; or let them have a system of restriction, founded on conditions of indemnity or security, so that the public had a chance of being secure. He could understand that in America, one of those systems was acted upon. For instance, in the state of Massachusetts, they had twelve chartered banks, and no others were allowed; and, the moment any one of them became unable to pay their notes in specie, it forfeited its charter. That might be a wise system in the country in which it existed. At all events, it was a system which he could conceive. It was a limited system, founded upon conditions. There was, however, another system which was founded upon perfect and entire liberty; and which, for similar reasons, might be found equally efficacious. Because, where perfect liberty prevailed, each person having an equal right to invest his capital, the wealthier must in time drive out the weaker and less solvent, and thus the same end would be obtained by different means. He might illustrate his argument by a reference to the state of the banking establishments in the metropolis. The private bankers in London had it in their power to circulate their own notes—a privilege which they all, however, invariably waived, because the public would not take them, so long as they could get those of the Bank of England, in the solvency of which they had more confidence. So, if there were chartered joint-stock banks in other parts of the kingdom, there could be no doubt but that they would immediatly absorb the whole circulation of the country. Therefore, by either of those systems, the object of security would be attained. But what was the system in existence at present? Why, the most rotten, the most insecure, the very worst, in every respect, that could possibly be conceived. Any petty tradesman, any grocer or cheesemonger, however destitute of property, might set up a bank in any place; whilst a joint-stock company, however large their capital, or a number of individuals, exceeding six, however respectable and wealthy they might be, were precluded from so doing by the present system. One more absurd, therefore, he repeated, could not be conceived. Let them, then, either continue the system of restriction in point of number, but qualify it by condition; or else allow full liberty of number: so that whichever they adopted, the public might have security for their property. The beneficial consequences resulting from one of these systems was manifested by its effects in Scotland. He knew he might be told that it was in vain for him to look to the example of that country, because they had not the power of granting charters. He admitted they had not, unless the Bank of England were to give up its charter; and therefore it was, that he had before said that his was but a half-measure. They had, however, consented to allow the restriction as to the number of partners in country banks to be removed, and so far one difficulty was removed. In return for this, the Bank might derive the consolation that they would have an opportunity of gratifying the desire, if they experienced it, of establishing branch banks throughout the country. Indeed, he believed they had a right to do so at present; and he confessed he was most anxious that they should make the experiment. But he trusted that, if they did not think it prudent to make the experiment themselves, they would not

suffer the people to wait until the year 1833, exposed to the consequences of the present system, but set the public free, by allowing the Crown to grant charters to country banks. He believed it would not in any respect injure them, but, on the contrary, while it would be attended with the greatest advantages to the country at large, it would be beneficial also, in its consequences, to the Bank itself.

This, then, was the nature of the measures which he had to propose; but, before he sat down, there were two or three points on which he wished to offer a few observations. A doctrine had gone forth to the public, to which it was necessary he should advert; because, upon it rested the defence of the country notes, and it had been alluded to by a noble friend of his on the first day of the session. His noble friend had said, that the measure of withdrawing the country notes altogether from circulation, was unwise, seeing that a paper circulation, convertible into gold, was at least as good as gold. The argument, however, was erroneous, because it was founded upon a false assumption. The paper was not all convertible into gold; for where the paper flourished, the gold, as he had before said, almost invariably disappeared. There was a material difference between applying a cure beforehand, and waiting until the cure was accomplished through the ruin of hundreds of thousands of persons. That was the great error of the doctrine to which he was alluding. It was true that the evil would carry with it its own cure; but when that cure came, it proved as great an evil as that of which it was to be the remedy. It was also to be recollected, that, although the doctrine might be true, in a poor country, where property consisted chiefly of land, in a great commercial country like this, where the currency was subject to greater fluctuations from the unsteady nature of its property, it did not apply. The object of every description of currency should be to make the value of property as steady and as little variable as possible.

And this reminded him of a subject on which he would give no opinion at present —he meant the Corn laws. He was afraid that when that subject came to be discussed, a great deal of heat and passion would be displayed on both sides. But he would recommend their lordships to look at it as one which called upon them to take a cool and dispassionate view of it; not with the consideration as to whether the rents of the landlord, or the wages of the labourer, were to be high or low; but with a view to discovering what would be most likely to produce the least violent fluctuations of property. The truth lay there, and he who solved that problem would certainly come to the wisest conclusion. In alluding to this subject, he had, perhaps, gone out of his way; but he had been led to it by referring to the fluctuation of property; and he could not help entreating of their lordships, when they came to consider it, to do so coolly and dispassionately, not with reference to this or that individual's interest, but to the interest and welfare of the community at large.

Having said thus much, he now came to the question of a measure of relief, which amongst others was afloat. He had stated what his majesty's government proposed doing; but he was aware that a wish had been expressed, that a remedy for the present distress might be afforded by means of the issue of Exchequer-bills, at this moment; and he knew that if he studied his own ease or his own popularity, he could not do so more effectually than by coming down to parliament with such a proposition. If he had not adopted that course, he trusted the House would give him credit for abstaining from it, from a thorough conviction that it was not likely to be attended with beneficial results. He had always thought that the precedent of 1793, in that respect, was not a favourable one, and therefore, ought not to be followed. But there was a great difference between that period and the present; for it could not be pretended that the commercial distress which now existed had any connexion whatever with political events. The case before their lordships was not one of that description. What would be the effect of such a measure? Not to leave the people to rely upon themselves. What was that but the very evil which he had deprecated; namely, the looking to government for aid, to relieve them from the consequences of their own extravagance. It was now three or four years since the landed interest was suffering great distress; and not a month passed at that time, that he was not beset with the most urgent applications for relief by the issue of Exchequer-bills, as had been previously granted during the existence of commercial distress. But, there was a great difference

between the two cases. Payment, in the one case, might be secured within a given time upon goods, but that was not the case upon land. The landed interest, however, did not the less consider that the state ought to come forward, and help them in distress, as it had done the commercial interest; for, said they, the commercial interests had the advantage of being able to send their goods abroad; they might combine to assist each other; the landed interests could not. The applications, however, had been rejected. These were the reasons why he could not agree to adopt that measure. But, with respect to what the noble lord opposite had said of the proceedings of the Bank of England on that subject, he saw no objection to it. All that government said upon that subject was this—if the Bank chose to go into the market and purchase a limited quantity of Exchequer-bills for the purpose of affording relief to the public, the government would pay them part of the six millions which they owed them, to prevent them from experiencing any inconvenience from so doing. One noble lord had expressed an opinion, that such an act, on the part of government, would be a species of guarantee to the Bank. It was no such thing. In so doing, we were certainly forestalling the stipulated time of payment; but we were willing to do so, if we could, by so doing, afford relief to the country.

He had now stated generally the principles on which the measures which he proposed were founded; and, of course, would be happy to afford any further explanation which might be deemed necessary. Their lordships knew, that from a given day, no new notes had been stamped, and that, after the 5th of April, 1829, the issue of one and two pound notes was to cease altogether. It was originally intended that the circulation of the one and two pound notes of the Bank of England should be put upon the same footing as those of the country banks; but, upon consideration, it had been deemed advisable to allow the notes of the Bank of England to be stamped until the 10th of October next, instead of ceasing forthwith, like the country bank notes. With respect to Scotland and Ireland, it was intended ultimately to place them on precisely the same footing with England, although it had not been considered expedient to do so immediately. Upon the best consideration, it was thought advisable to wait a year or two after the time limited for England, before the change took place in Ireland. While in Scotland, it was intended that it should take place from the year 1829, when the change would take place in this country.—The noble earl concluded by moving the second reading of the bill.

The Earl of *Limerick* wished to observe, that in Ireland there was no circulation whatever but of notes under *5l.* Gold was not to be had. Some small quantities might be kept in certain banks, but that there was any in circulation he denied. It would require a great increase of bullion to meet the discontinuance of the circulation of notes in Ireland.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, that when, upon a former occasion, a noble lord had introduced the subject of the Corn laws, he had treated his observations in a way in which they ought to have been treated; namely, by not noticing them at all. But the case was different when the noble earl opposite thought proper to travel out of his way to allude to it, for the purpose of treating the House to an exhortation on the subject. The noble earl had said, that from what he perceived in the House, he anticipated some heat and intemperance in the discussion of the Corn laws, and he had warned their lordships against the influence of passion on that discussion. Now, he had only to say, that when he had last argued that question, he had not used a single argument in which he had not considered the interest of the landed proprietor and of the manufacturer as combined. In arguing in favour of the continuance of the Corn laws, he had as much advocated the rights of the manufacturer as those of the landed proprietor; and on behalf of all, he had contended for an equality of price, for a moderate remunerating price, a price beneficial to all, and not subject to any variation. He believed that those who looked at the prices since that period, would find as little, if not less, fluctuation than before those laws were imposed. When the subject was again brought forward, he would discuss it in the same spirit; and God forbid that he should ever attempt to separate the great interests of this country. He could not permit it to go abroad, that their lordships were likely to argue such a momentous question with passion. He had found, and he would find again, that in the discussion of that great subject, the interests of the poor man and of the great land-

holder, would be equally consulted. He now came to the main question under discussion. That question he conceived to be—how far it was proper, to the extent to which this bill interfered with the charter of the Bank of England, for their lordships to interfere on the subject? The noble earl had stated some circumstances, from which he inferred the propriety of discontinuing the circulation of one and two pound notes four years earlier than the term now limited. He was not prepared to say whether or not they ought to abolish the circulation of notes under *5l.*, nor was he called upon to give any opinion upon that question at present; neither was he called upon to give any opinion as to the policy of the exclusive privileges of the Bank of England. But, admitting, for a moment, the principle of the measures before the House to be sound, the question was, whether it was right, in the present state of the country, for government to bring forward any discussion of this subject. He believed that, if their lordships duly considered the matter, they would join with him in saying, that this was an improper time. What had been said on this subject in the Speech from the Throne? And what had been stated in the noble earl's letter to the Bank? Why, that the panic had subsided, and that things had returned to their proper and accustomed channel. Now, if that were true, it clearly proved that this was not the time for agitating the present question. He believed, that the panic had been about expiring, but that, by these discussions, it had been very unseasonably revived. All he asked was, that the ministers would allow the country to recover its situation; and then this matter might be discussed with temper without doors, and with no fear of passion within. He thought there was no more improper period for effecting a change in the system of our currency than at this moment. It was impossible for him to discuss this question now in the manner he wished; and yet it was equally impossible for him not to attempt to go into it, and to show that the noble earl's arguments had been founded on a mistaken view of the calamities of the country; or, if his view was right, his measures were of all others the most likely to magnify them. He agreed with the noble earl only in this, that we ought to ascertain the true nature of the disease before we attempted to apply a remedy. The noble earl's plans were founded upon the principle of there being an excess of paper circulating throughout the country; but this he totally denied. He had also asserted, that no sooner had the Bank of England one-pound notes ceased, than the one-pound notes of the country bankers had increased, and hence arose an excess of paper. For his part, he wished to know what an excess of paper really meant. He thought it had been settled beyond dispute, that what at one time might be a great excess of paper for conducting the transactions of a country, might at another time be a great deficiency. There was no certain quantity of a circulating medium which, as the noble earl seemed to suppose, could form a lasting standard, or measure, beyond which all could be called excess, and beneath which all was to be esteemed deficiency. The quantity of circulating medium was to be estimated in relation to the extent of the transactions for which it was required. For instance, the quantity of the circulating medium, which would be absolutely requisite to conduct the multitudinous transactions in which this country was engaged, would, if transported to another country, prove ridiculously superabundant, or ridiculously deficient. Let the House consider how the affairs of this country had stood. The three per cents, which were held to be the criterion of the value of the funded property of all denominations, had varied lately from 75 and 80, up to 90 and 97. Land, which before had been thought to be well sold at 25 years' purchase, brought 33 years' purchase. The same thing had occurred with all fixed securities. Now, was it possible that the same transactions could be carried on in land and stock, at high prices with the same circulating medium which existed when they were at low prices? Was there not a greater extent of currency plainly implied in that rise of value upon the same land and stock? The argument was equally applicable to the proposition of the noble lord, who talked of speculation having raised the prices of commodities. Did the noble earl really think that the augmented transactions could be carried on, and the prices be raised, with the same quantity of circulating medium which existed before? This was utterly impossible. It was nothing, therefore, to show, that the quantity of the circulating medium had increased. It must be shown also, that it exceeded its due proportion, in

comparison with commodities at the different periods stated. It would have been very easy to ascertain the fact, if the inquiry had been properly directed. Adverting to the Bullion committee, the noble lord observed, that they had very judiciously rested on the supposition, that mankind acted uniformly on the sense of self-interest; and that, if the public should see that the state of the exchanges and the price of gold were running adversely to the paper circulation, they would promptly exchange whatever notes they held for hard cash; and by that means entirely prevent an excessive issue of paper, one time with another. In this they had merely concurred with Dr. Adam Smith, and all the writers on political science who were of any authority. Dr. Smith having proposed, as part of the basis of a system of mixed currency, paper convertible into gold, with which he proposed to couple the agency of banks throughout the country. But how was the excess of the paper circulation proved? It was said, that there was a great rise in the prices of commodities. But, rise of prices might proceed from an alteration in the proportion of the quantity of various commodities as compared with each other. They must go a step further; they must prove—if it was meant to be shown, that the rise of prices manifested an excess of paper—that the value of paper was diminished in proportion to the value of commodities. Now, gold was a commodity; and, while paper did not decline in comparison with the price of bullion, it would be difficult to prove that paper was in excess. While a twenty-shilling note was convertible into a sovereign weighing 123 grains of gold and a fraction, it must be held to be equivalent to 123 grains and a little better of gold; and therefore not depreciated, and therefore not in excess —unless it were attempted to be proved, against all established science, that things equal to one and the same subject were unequal to one another. The spirit of scheming, and the excess of paper issues, had been absurdly linked together. How stood the question with respect to the great eras of scheming which had marked our latter history? Was it the over-abundance of one and two pound notes—was it an excess of country bank paper—which set a-going the bubbles of the South-sea project? So far from it, there were at that time no small notes in existence, nor any paper of country banks floating. The same might be said of other periods. It was not the excess of paper which excited the schemes of 1793, which were happily put an end to by the war. There were no allegations of the kind at that time. He could not concur with the noble earl in ascribing the spirit of scheming to an excess of paper. High prices there might be, for a time, through the influence of scheming, but his imagination could not trace how the issues of one and two pound notes could have called the schemers into action. There was a whimsical contrast observable in the opinions expressed on this subject between two eminent writers of the day, Mr. Mushett and Mr. Tooke. The latter gentleman attributed to high prices the propagation of all the late joint-stock companies, and wild projects of speculation. Mr. Mushett assigned low prices as the cause of the same evils. Leaving those gentlemen to decide as they might between opinions so extreme, he did not believe that either high or low prices were enough to account for the causes of so strange an agitation as that which the country experienced in the course of last year. Was it, then, that he was puzzled by these phenomena, and that he had no way of solving the difficulty in his own mind? No such thing. Now then, to discover the real cause of these phenomena, in attempting which he was led naturally to the circumstances of a few years back, and the measures which had been adopted, under the auspices of a noble lord opposite (Bexley), who was then sitting in another house. He would observe, in passing, that it would be not a little surprising if that noble lord, after having brought the House in which he then sat, to concur in a resolution, that Bank-paper not convertible into gold on demand, which was actually at a discount of 25 per cent compared with gold, was not depreciated, should now concur with the noble earl opposite, that paper was in excess, and therefore, by implied necessity, under a depreciation, though immediately convertible at the discretion of the owner. He pronounced this idea of the excessive issue of paper being the cause of the fluctuations and mischief which had recently occurred to be wholly ridiculous and untenable. The real cause was to be found in the working of that sinking fund which had, within a few years, been established on an effective footing of 5,000,000*l.* annually. Let their

lordships observe how this operated, and say if it was possible to deny that, instead of 1,000,000*l.* which was the former amount of the effective sinking fund, and which was scarcely felt in the money transactions of the country, the public had now to contend with an excess of capital equal to 5,000,000*l.* thrown in annually to seek employment among the other interests. The commissioners go to market, and buy three per cents or Exchequer bills held by dissentients to the reduction of the four per cents or any other public securities. These securities must be held by capitalists. The commissioners succeed in persuading them to sell and pay their money. Must not that money immediately enter the markets, and become a candidate for new employment? Was there not, in like manner, a quantity of 5,000,000*l.* thrown in every year to become a candidate for new employment? Must not this extraordinary supply of capital diminish the value? Was there any writer who attempted to deny that extraordinary supply had a tendency to diminish the value? Here, then, was a new experiment upon the general interests. While the war lasted, the sinking fund did not, in effect exist. Its operation was farcical or delusive; receiving 20,000 000*l.* with one hand, and paying 30,000,000*l.* with the other, of course this brought no excess of capital into the market. It was a new feature in our affairs to have annually 5,000,000*l.* brought as a candidate for new employment. It shewed at once the reason for the increased prices in fixed securities. This it was that had reduced the interest upon them. This it was that had sunk the five per cents nearly as low in interest as the interest before paid on the 3½ per cents, and its effect was still going on to a further reduction. They must see how the case stood with men who had disposable capital. They could not be at a loss to calculate its effect upon other interests. Mortgages undertaken at 5 per cent were in hundreds of instances redeemed with money got at lower interest. The situation of the borrower now began to be one of difficulty; he found himself narrowed in his enjoyments; he listened eagerly to projects which would be likely to retrieve his income; one successful project counteracted the experience of many which failed; as in the lottery scheme, the drawing of a 20,000*l.* prize spread the hope of gain far and wide, beyond any possibilities even of the law of chances. In former periods the same consequences had followed the diminution of interest, though no excess of one and two pound notes could then be alleged. Mr. Hutchison was the author of the scheme of our first sinking fund, which in 1716 was adopted by sir Robert Walpole. The foundation of that scheme was laid in a plan for lowering the interest of the public securities. There was the same circumstance of lowering the interest of fixed securities just before the bursting out of the South-sea scheme; and the same cause had then, as lately, led to the same disposition for adventures and projects, which deluded the capitalists with the hope of obtaining more interest, and replacing their income upon the former footing. Such, he assured their lordships, not on his own dicta, but on the arguments of the gravest authorities, was the real cause of the recent fluctuations in interest and in capital, and then in the prices of commodities. It was impossible to circulate commodities at their previously reduced value, while the sinking fund was constantly stepping in with an increase of capital seeking for new employment. The noble earl opposite had objected to him, that he was not authorized in saying, that the noble earl, in predicting the evil consequences of that rash and wild spirit of speculation in last session, had left out of view the operations of the country banks. On the contrary, the noble earl insisted that he had pointed out the transactions of the country banks even at that period, as an effective cause of the prevalence of that speculative spirit. But he put it to the House, did the noble earl then say any thing of the excessive issues of country bank paper? If the noble earl did really take that excess into consideration, what did he mean by that threat, which he very properly held out in terrorem, against those who should advance too far in that mad career, telling them, that if they got themselves into difficulties, they must not look for any commiseration from government after that warning, as ministers had determined not to advance any thing for their assistance in the way of Exchequer-bills? Was there any man in the kingdom, who had talked or written upon the subject, from the noble lord on the woolsack down to the most petty newspaper editor, who did not assign as the cause of the calamity the wild and disastrous speculations and the projects of

the joint-stock companies? If he was right, then the high prices had been occasioned by 5,000,000*l.* of capital coming into the market annually as a candidate for new employment; and, as its tendency was to urge on speculation, so its operation, within the last year, had been to call out 17,000,000*l.* of capital, which were exhausted in foreign loans, in mining, in speculations of silk, linen, cotton, and other articles. This contraction of the general capital of the country had led to a reduction of prices equal to one-fifth. The inevitable consequence of that was a diminution of credit, and from thence came a fall of prices in the fixed securities. The 3 per cents were before at 97, and land at 33 years' purchase; circumstances changed, and the 3 per cents were at 80, land at not more than 30 years purchase. It was impossible that all this could be done so suddenly without having the effect of causing many stoppages. Some among the best houses were nearly crippled, while bankruptcy at once overtook the unsound dealer, who had habitually depended on accommodation.—Now for the remedies suggested and proposed by the government. He wished to know, if the government had left the country alone, what might at this time have been the amount of the loss? He would venture to say not 2,000,000*l.* altogether. Things would rapidly have come round, and the industry of the country would, by this time, have been again actively engaged. But the noble earl chose to put out an alarming statement, in the Speech from the Throne, deprecating the causes of the evil, and declaring that some measures, on the part of government, were absolutely necessary. He put it to the noble earl, and to the House, to calculate, before that relief could possibly reach the public, what must be the loss in staying the transactions of every kind in the commerce and manufactures of so active and wealthy a community, in consequence of that alarming denunciation of the causes, and then to say if that loss was not greater than all the evils to which the new remedies were to be applied. But he must ask, did the noble earl as minister, attempt to do any thing to restrain these excessive issues in the operations of country banks? For his own part, he could not see those symptoms of a chief agency in the country banks to the production of the present evils. He saw, at the time, men of all parties, in that as well as in the other House, joining in the schemes, and strengthening the good opinion entertained of those schemes by the public with the authority of their names. The noble earl had never done any thing to discourage the speculation and scheming of which he now complained. Had the government ever tried to put in execution the Bubble-act? The noble earl might say that he thought the Bubble-act afforded no means of security; then why did he not propose some other legislatorial provision? The members of the public offices were, to his own knowledge, speculators in these scheming companies, and yet the noble earl had never attempted to put the Bubble-act into execution. No exceptions had been taken by the noble earl to any thing that he now denounced as so prejudicial.—His noble friend, who was absent from indisposition, and himself, had exerted themselves to the utmost to undeceive the country. Day after day had he teased the House with prophecies which had been but too fully realized.

The noble earl opposite had taken the amount of coin in circulation at 16,000,000*l.* How the noble earl had arrived at that knowledge was beyond his ability to tell; and so it was how the noble earl had succeeded in getting any return at all of the quantity exported, which the noble earl had put at 7,000,000*l.* All he could say of it was, that three years ago, when he had called for that account, he was answered, that since the coin was allowed by law to be exported without being sworn to, no register had been kept of the amount. He would not, however, dispute the estimate of the noble earl. He was aware that the business of a banker did not require him to hoard capital to answer demands on him to such an amount as would subtract 6,000,000*l.* from the circulation. He could not suppose that the sum was so great. The securities which were held by bankers might be such as to be capable of being recalled at the end of a year or a month, or at the pleasure of the lender. Their property might be good in the light of securities; but, as to that sum in coin, they had it not. Suppose them to be called on suddenly by the country to produce 5,000,000*l.* They must call upon their customers in turn, who had their capital actively employed. The noble earl must first create a further demand for coin to the amount of six millions, before his expectations would be realized.

The noble earl talked of joint-stock companies, with an increased number of partners, as one remedy. If the noble earl could find men ready to embark in those schemes in greater numbers than hitherto allowed by law, he would own himself to have greatly mistaken the subject. If at any time the noble earl could find six men, or more, who were ready to embark their whole property with the chance of dividing it to the last shilling in case of failure—taking into account, too, the variety of temper, and disposition, and the sense of risk—it would very much confound all his previous calculations. He knew that such establishments had been attempted, and one of them had been set on foot last summer. They had done him the honour of applying to him to be their governor, and had stated, that, as they only wished for his patronage and advice in directing their affairs, they did not mean to call upon him at all as a sharer. His reply was, that he felt the compliment which they intended him, but, as he never could be brought to embark his property in such a scheme, he could not lend it the sanction of his name, and make himself a decoy-duck to induce others to do so. The noble earl might flatter himself that, after the passing of this measure, every thing would go on as before. He would find, however, that banking laws must, both in principle and detail, be entirely new modelled. Did he suppose that an increased number of partners would add one iota to that general security of banks? It would give no security at all. The richest partnership ever known in any joint-stock bank in Scotland, was that of Douglas and Co., and its failure in 1772, which was also the greatest bankruptcy known in those parts, produced the most distressing consequences. Security there was none, either in the number of partners or in their wealth, if there was not skill in transacting business. So far from the remedies proposed being effectual, they were almost sure to lead to the utmost distress.

He complained, that the noble earl opposite had alluded to many things which he ought not to have touched; and had not alluded to one topic of which he was bound to have taken notice. The point which he ought to have noticed, and did not, was the effect of the mint regulations. The seignorage on silver was too heavy, and government would not allow any body but itself to issue silver. At a time when they appeared so anxious to withdraw the one-pound notes, and to let in gold, why did they persist in exempting silver? Why not allow a free mint in silver as well as a free mint in gold? What reason could be assigned for so absurd an exception? The father of the noble earl opposite had published a book on the subject, which contained one of the most ridiculous and absurd arguments that he had ever met with. It was contended in that book, that, as we were a richer nation, we required a more valuable standard; that silver might do for the people of the continent, but gold must be our standard. This was similar to the argument, that as we were in a greater degree than other nations manufacturers of broad cloth, we ought, by the same rule, to have the longest yard measure. Some gentlemen were for a double standard of gold and silver, and he could not directly oppose that. He strongly recommended the adoption of silver as a standard at a small agio. The absurdity of excluding this standard, which was common to all Europe besides, was, to the last degree, absurd when considered in detail. It was the pride of the noble earl's administration, that treaties of amity and commerce had been concluded with the independent states of South America. Were they still prepared to refuse to admit that standard which was allowed to France? What would be the consequence? Some of the returns would be made in silver ingots, which would necessarily be conveyed to the continent, where there was a free market, while the seignorage here amounted to a tax of one and a half per cent. He recollected arguing that point fully when those mint regulations were settled. He rejoiced at the prospect of seeing something done towards carrying into effect that which he considered to be so indispensable.—Some remarks he must make with regard to the application of this plan to Scotland. He confessed he had never heard any proposition with more astonishment than that of the noble earl, for extending to that country the remedy for evils which were only known in this. When did it once occur that Scotland was in a state to require such a plan? Bank-notes were in constant circulation there, and always had been; but never, except in one instance, had the interference of the legislature been necessary, and then it was exerted, as he admitted,

in a very proper way. There had been some notes issued which were payable, at the option of the parties, either on demand, or at six months from the date, bearing interest. Those notes had been very properly abolished by an act of parliament. But, for notes of one and two pound payable on demand, they had been in circulation in Scotland constantly since 1696, without any inconvenience to the public, or loss to the poor, or suspicion of any excess of issues. The noble earl would see why he did not believe that joint-stock companies would take in this country, when he had explained how they were managed in Scotland. Of thirty banks, seven were chartered or joint-stock companies; the other twenty-three were common partnership banks, of from four to fifteen partners. Were these less secure than the chartered or joint-stock banks? They were quite as secure.—The notes of the one were as good as the notes of the other. The royal bank and the bank of Scotland, in this respect, had no advantage whatever over the partnership banks. But, what was the nature of that security? There was no bank in Scotland, whether in Edinburgh, or any other part of the kingdom, the agents of which did not meet the agents of the other banks at least twice a week, at which times they interchanged the notes which they held of each other's bank, and the balance was paid in gold or bills on the Bank of England at sight. How could there ever be an over issue; and how could they derive any profit from it, should they attempt an over-issue of their own paper, when they must immediately balance the amount in cash or bills on England? In fact, there had never been an over-issue of their paper. This, he knew, was contradicted by some persons who affected to be deeply skilled on the subject. And here he could not avoid noticing an article on this subject, which, it seemed, was to appear in a popular review. In that article, the writer did certainly advance a most extraordinary proposition—extraordinary from its total inaccuracy in point of fact, and no less extraordinary from its total absurdity in point of argument. It was a paper on the currency, in which the author professed to teach the two Houses of parliament their duty. As "the Edinburgh Review" would not be published sufficiently early to instruct their lordships in the course which the writer deemed it advisable for their lordships to pursue in the parliamentary discussions on this subject now before them, the author—such was the overweening importance that he attached to his opinions—had published this article in a separate pamphlet, and had sent a copy to each of the members of both Houses. He should read an extract from this pamphlet, to which he wished particularly to call the attention of their lordships. The writer stated, that "those who were acquainted with the real state of things in Scotland, were not a little amused by the paragraphs in the newspapers about the confidence, stability, &c. of the Scotch banks during the late crisis. The truth is, that these establishments were then, we shall not say on the brink of destruction, but certainly in a state of very great danger. Had the British Linen Company and the National bank not stepped forward to the assistance of the Fife bank, the latter must have stopped payment; and the alarm that would have been caused by that circumstance, in conjunction with that which was caused by the failure of Pole, Thornton, and Co., could hardly have failed to occasion a run, that might have been productive of the most disastrous consequences." This statement was not correct, and was calculated to produce the greatest alarm and distress throughout the country. The fact was, that the Fife bank had actually stopped payment, instead of that event having been prevented by the anterior operations of the two establishments mentioned. The 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes of the Fife bank were dispersed amongst the poor, and it was expected that the industrious classes would have been great sufferers. But, at that critical moment, the national bank and the British Linen Company interfered, and averted the evil. They well knew what were the available effects of the house whose credit had been shaken. They were cognisant of the fact, that their concerns had been mismanaged for three years, by persons who were not acquainted with the proper mode of conducting business; and, under these circumstances, they stepped forward with their assistance. Those great establishments felt that there was such security as justified them in putting an end to the evil at once. But, did this circumstance afford any proof that the Scotch country banks were in danger? No such thing. It showed, on the contrary, that their foundation was solid, and that they commanded

general confidence throughout the country. In this instance the two establishments which he had named said—"We will take up all the notes at once, because we are quite sure we can do so with perfect safety." Was this a proof of any thing else, but that those banking establishments which could command such relief were in a state of prosperity? It appeared that those who ministered their aid had the fullest possible confidence in the strength of the security offered. Looking to the proverbial caution of the people of Scotland, he was sure that no one would expect to see them going out of their way to assist their friends; no one would suppose that, in a chivalric mood, they would, without any attention to their own interests, study the good of their friends alone, by keeping these 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes in their hands, if they imagined they were likely to suffer by such a proceeding. But the fact was, that the people of Scotland were perfectly satisfied with the currency. Now, he should be glad to know, on what principle the noble earl meant to alter the system which had so long prevailed in Scotland, and which had not been attended there with any inconvenience? There was not a man in that country, he would venture to say, from the highest to the lowest, merchant, manufacturer, or tradesman, who wished any alteration to be made. Why, then, should the noble earl apply to that country a remedy, which he found it necessary to resort to for the purpose of eradicating a disease that happened to be prevalent in this, but which had not visited Scotland? As well might a physician who had cured one of their lordships of a painful disease by a violent medicine, prescribe it in all cases. It would be strange, if that physician, having been called in to attend one of the reverend prelates opposite, should say, "I have seen most excellent effects produced by this medicine, and, as I have anointed my lord such-a-one, I must be permitted to anoint you also," although the reverend prelate's age and gravity of his calling might fairly be supposed to exempt him from the necessity of using such a medicament. In this way, the noble earl was about to extend to the people of Scotland a remedy, when in fact no evil existed which called for it. On the contrary, the existing system had prevailed for a century and a half, and no inconvenience, no mischief, had been known to result from it. In the course of the discussion to which the subject of the currency must give rise, he would take an opportunity of explaining fully to their lordships the calamity which an extension to Scotland of the noble earl's principle was likely to produce. He had done his utmost to convince their lordships; first, that government had mistaken the cause of the injury; and secondly, that the remedy would create a greater degree of suffering than noble lords had anticipated. It was a remedy which was to take place in the course of three years; but, in that time, the situation of the country might be very different from what it was at present. The noble earl was sanguine in his expectation of the establishment of joint-stock bank companies. For his own part, he thought it was vain to hope for them. The disease was really of the nature which he had described. It arose from a great extra supply in the first place, and a great extra demand of capital in the second; and such being its origin, it appeared to him that the measure now proposed would not remove it.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, that after what had fallen from his noble friend who had just sat down, he would endeavour, as much as possible, to avoid touching on several of the topics noticed by him. To one point in particular which his noble friend had mentioned he would not advert at all, or, if he did, but very slightly, as his noble friend had thrown around it a sort of cordon sanitaire. His noble friend had been justly induced, in dealing with this important subject, not to confine himself to the bill immediately before the House. He had viewed it, as their lordships ought to view it, with reference to the general state of credit, to the circulation of the country, and to the operation of other measures which it was the intention of his majesty's ministers to propose. He trusted, therefore, that he might be allowed to claim somewhat of the same indulgence in considering this subject. The topics to which he alluded necessarily divided themselves into two parts; the one was that which the noble earl had described as having been lately adopted by the king's government with a view to the immediate relief of the country; the second was that which had been proposed to parliament for the purpose of administering, if not a complete, at least a powerful remedy against a recurrence of that ruinous disorder, the existence of which no man attempted to deny. These

different classes of measures were totally distinct, inasmuch as they rested on grounds essentially different. One of them assumed to be founded on a recurrence to the old and wise principle of placing the credit and currency of the country on a sound and permanent foundation; while the other was admitted to be a departure from an established principle, authorized and justified by the immediate necessity of the case. He would, in the first place, call the attention of their lordships to the measure which had been adopted with respect to the Bank. That measure had, he understood, been only determined on in the course of the last few days, and they had that night, for the first time, received correct information on the subject from the noble earl opposite. Admitting that the distress of the commercial world had arrived at such a pitch as justified the government in calling on the legislature to interfere with respect to that which was the common concern of all men, still he must say, that such a proceeding was a departure from sound principle. Because, in his view of the subject, every attempt on the part of the government to interfere with the currency of the country, was, to whatever extent it proceeded, a departure from those sound principles which every intelligent writer on the subject maintained. He confessed the impression on his mind was, that, under such a necessity as was described, it would have been better to have taken the course which the noble earl informed them had been rejected by his majesty's government, than that which they had preferred. The course they had adopted would, in his opinion, operate more indirectly and less effectually than the other; and he would shortly state the grounds on which he came to that conclusion. It was laid down as a broad fact, that the present state of public credit rendered parliamentary interference absolutely necessary. If it were so, then that interference should be as efficient as possible: it should go directly to the root of the evil which it was proposed to remove. What, then, was the evil which was to be remedied? It was not so much the absence of money which the country felt, as the want of confidence in a certain class of individuals who required to be relieved. The noble earl said, that to correct this state of things, the Bank had been induced to go into the market and to purchase 2,000,000*l*. of Exchequer bills. Such a purchase must have a considerable effect on the market, namely, that of throwing in 2,000,000*l*. in addition to the currency already in circulation; but, non constat that those 2,000,000*l*. would find their way (so immediately at least as could be wished) to those parties who were the objects of relief. This issue could have no other effect at the moment except to aid and assist speculations in the market. It would aid the speculations of those who were in the habit of trafficking in Exchequer bills; but it would not find its way into the pockets of individuals, who, supposing their property and their different securities good and solid at any other time, were distressed because those securities were not available at the present moment. This measure would, therefore, fail, in a great degree, in administering relief at the present moment. The primary object of the measure described by the noble earl, certainly was not to raise the rate of Exchequer bills, but to extend relief to those who were suffering from the pressure of the times. The plan might do very well for the Exchequer, but their lordships must look to that which was the primary object of the measure; namely, the relief of certain individuals; and he must contend, that this departure from an established principle was not the best mode of effecting that object. The most efficient course would have been to follow the example (to the extent which the noble earl had stated) which had been set in the year 1793. In doing this, ministers would have had the benefit of experience: they would have known that the plan then adopted, however objectionable in point of principle, had been attended with the effect which it was hoped would follow from it, and that, too, without any ultimate loss accruing from the plan. On these grounds, therefore, although he was as slow as any man could be in admitting, under any circumstances, the addition of one more to those most dangerous precedents which permitted the interference of government—even for a good purpose—in adding to the circulation of the country, yet, having arrived unhappily at that state of things in which it became necessary to take this attitude, he certainly would, on the whole, have wished ministers to have availed themselves of the beaten path, attended, as such a course would have been, by the benefit and influence of past experience. He had thought it right to state thus much, both on account

of the principle which the measure involved, and the mischief which might arise from it.—He should now dismiss this part of the question, and enter on the consideration of the larger and perhaps the more important topic, because it embraced the whole case—he meant that view of the subject which related to the cause of the evil, and which treated of a permanent remedy for it. One of the questions which had been asked the noble earl opposite, and those who were convinced that the present state of things called for a direct interference on the part of the government, might, he conceived, be easily answered. That question was, "Why should you interfere with the principle of free trade in a paper circulation any more than in any other article?" Now, advocate as he was for the general principles of free trade, he could see no connexion whatever between those principles and the principles by which the circulation was governed. He could not maintain the principles on which free trade proceeded without admitting this exception, that, with respect to those regulations which governed the intercourse between man and man, and, of course, property, it was fitting for government, under particular circumstances, to interpose. If the legislature were allowed to alter weights and measures which were used for the ordinary purposes of the country, he conceived it to be quite clear, that it was equally the duty of the legislature to interpose for the sake of giving to individuals, either coin, or that which, under peculiar circumstances, they were compelled to receive as coin, to the extent and to the full real value of that which their labour or their merchandise ought to command. They ought to receive the full real value, not a nominal and fictitious value; and the legislature certainly had a right to effect that object. For his own part, he could conceive no principle more hostile to free trade, than that which would tie up the hands of the legislature in such a case, and allow one man to put his hands in the pocket of another, and take out of it as much as he pleased. Admitting the necessity of this interference—admitting that the present crisis demanded this interposition—he was of opinion, in common with every enlightened person in the country, that the evil was inherent in the system as it now stood. Some individuals, however, thought that the present was not a proper moment for the discussing and setting at rest this important question. They contended, that a period of greater calm and tranquillity ought to be selected for that purpose. He knew not what the noble earl opposite felt on the subject; but if by any means the legislature could, for a period of six months or a year, suspend the wheel of currency, and put a chain and drag on it, so that, at the expiration of that time, it would be in the same situation as it was at the present moment, he would not object to the delay. Looking at the present system as exceedingly defective, he would, in that case, willingly take a later period, for the purpose of making an effectual alteration. But they all knew, that when the wheel of circulation was out of order, it could not be made to stand still in the way which he had described; and if it were admitted, as he believed and trusted it was admitted by all persons, that there was an indispensable necessity for altering the system of the currency, it was for the legislature to consider, whether it was not far less galling to impose those fetters when the members were contracted, rather than to select a period when they would be distended and enlarged, and when, in consequence, it would be a much more difficult duty to impose those necessary restraints. He thought a full case had been made out for parliament to act, and to act at once; and, when he looked to the state of disorder which prevailed, arising partly from speculation and partly from the currency (on which he would presently say a word or two with reference to what had fallen from his noble friend), he thought that the legislature could not proceed with too much celerity. When such was the situation of affairs, was it matter of supererogation to inquire, whether there had not been, in a period of profound peace—without any circumstance from abroad that could affect or alter the internal condition of the country—was it, he demanded, too much to ask, whether there had not been effected, in that time of calm and tranquillity, a greater change and convulsion in the mercantile property of Great Britain, than had been effected in the kingdom of France in 1815, when that country was overran and conquered by foreigners? When he was asked, what he conceived to be the reason of this mighty change—was he wrong, if he stated in answer, that there was something fundamentally wrong in the system on which the cur-

rency of this country rested, and which alone caused this convulsion? The evil which existed in the present day was not only felt amongst those whose trade was speculation, but it had found its way even to the lowest classes of life. Ought not the legislature, then, to consider what the existing law was, and to see how far the currency was affected by that law? The noble earl opposite attributed the evil almost entirely to over speculation; but he must contend, that the real source of the evil was to be traced to the state of the currency. The state of the currency produced speculation; which was, in fact, the secondary evil. That point, however, he did not think very material for discussion in that House. It was manifest, by a reference to events which had occurred in the last two years, that between the currency and speculation there was a mutual action and re-action. No commercial country, like that in which they lived, could exist without being affected by the spirit of speculation; and it was the peculiar nature of the currency in this country, as it at present stood, to administer ample food to that speculation which was of the most mischievous and of the most unbounded description. He thought a case was fairly made out to induce their lordships to interfere, and to adopt some efficient remedy for this crying evil. His noble friend had, however, found out another reason for this extensive speculation. He had stated, that one of the great causes, indeed almost the sole cause, of this unusual spirit of speculation, was the application of 5,000,000*l.* annually as a sinking fund. This his noble friend looked upon as an addition to the speculating capital of the country. He argued, that if these 5,000,000*l.* were not taken from the people, the speculating capital would be diminished to that amount; but that, when applied as a sinking fund, it really became a speculating capital. Now, he could not see that the 5,000,000*l.* thus taken annually out of the pockets of the people tended more to increase the speculating capital, than if that sum were suffered to remain in their pockets. The speculation, he believed, would be exactly the same in either case. There was, however, this difference—the sinking fund consisted of 5,000,000*l.* of real capital, but the evil against which they had now to contend was, that of a nominal capital and a nominal surplus, which were forced out for the moment for the purposes of speculation. Now, on looking back a little, what circumstances did he find, with respect to the speculative proceedings which afterwards took place? Previous to the period of those speculations being generally undertaken, he found an issue from the Bank increasing in the ratio of 8 per cent, from 1824, and producing some unfavourable effect. He also found in 1825, after the Bank issues had increased, that the issue of country bank notes, on the average of three years, had been increased about 33 per cent. Gold, he perceived, in consequence, rapidly left the country. Then came a sudden demand for that metal; and then came those failures, and all those unfortunate circumstances, with which their lordships were well acquainted. The increased issues of the Bank of England, in 1824, led to an extension of the issues of the country banks. This created a rise of prices in London, and goods were sent in large quantities from the country to the metropolis. The same thing occurred in the country. An opposition rise of prices, not a beneficial one, took place there also. Thus, the issues of country paper were extended, and these, together with the additional issues of the Bank of England, produced that state of things which they were now called upon to alter and amend. When, however, he stated this, with respect to the Bank of England, he was sure no one would suspect him of thinking that the gentlemen in the direction of that establishment were at all aware of the effect and influence of those issues. He believed they were not only not aware of the effects which they were likely to produce, but that, if they had been aware of its probable consequences, they were so hampered by their relations with government, in consequence of issues which were placed out of their own reach, and which were made under the sanction of the government and the parliament, that they could not have warded off the evil. They were not, in fact, in that free situation in which the Bank of England ought to be placed. They were not able to exercise an immediate control over their own issues; and, being in that situation, the machinery of their establishment could not act properly. The Bank directors were not in that situation in which a body, having a great influence over the circulation of the country, ought to be placed. The noble earl opposite, in referring to the state of the relations between the government and

the Bank, had adverted to 6,000,000*l.* of Exchequer-bills held by that body; but, was that the whole amount of the weight which the transactions with government had pressed on the Bank? Was there no further sum placed beyond their control? Or was not that only a part of the burthen which deprived them of acting with that facility which they ought to possess, to enable them to contract their issues when necessary? Undoubtedly this was not the only clog on the exercise of their discretion. In addition to that, they had provided for what was called the deficiencies in the 4 per cents. That, he believed, was made good by the Bank to the amount of 3,500,000*l.* And, beyond all this, they had another charge, arising from that most extraordinary act of parliament, adopted some years ago on the suggestion of the noble earl, and agreed to by parliament. That plan, thus recognized by parliament, rested on one of the most extraordinary conundrums that was ever heard of, and was most appropriately denominated "the Dead Weight." By that plan, they were called on at one and the same moment to raise taxes on the present generation, for the relief of posterity and to raise taxes on posterity for the relief of the present generation. This was a conundrum so strange, so unaccountable, that he did not think any noble lord would rise for the purpose of defending it. This "Dead Weight" was attended with the bad effect of increasing the difficulties of the Bank; for, by this extraordinary scheme, no less a sum than 8,000,000*l.* was taken out of the hands of the Bank, and completely placed beyond their control. They, in consequence, found themselves unable to act when the circulation of country Bank paper had increased in the ratio of 33 per cent. They were then obliged, instead of giving that effectual relief which they otherwise might have done, to allow the evil to flow unchecked in its mischievous course. He remained, and always should remain, the firm supporter of the doctrine which held as beneficial, a paper currency convertible into cash; but it was necessary to have a sound circulation in the country, that the convertibility of paper into cash should be immediate—that the check to an improper issue of paper might be resorted to without delay. But, unhappily, such a state of things had arisen in this country as prevented the application of that check and remedy, until a great number of persons had sunk under the pressure of the times, overwhelmed by the misfortunes attendant on rash speculations. Neither government nor parliament could do any thing at the moment to arrest the evil. It had, however, in some degree, effected its own cure, for the exchanges had at length come round. The circulation had been narrowed, the exchanges had turned in our favour, and there had been a rapid flow of gold into the country. There were other material circumstances which influenced the situation of the Bank, and which he hoped would never occur again. One of the circumstances which operated, in addition to those he had already stated, was the advances made by the Bank—he believed at the instigation of government—in the shape of loans on mortgages [The earl of Liverpool intimated, that this was not the case]. He had heard that government had advised the measure; but he was extremely glad to hear that it was not so, because he was convinced that it was a system of operation which it must injure any banking company to engage in. It added to that portion of the circulation which was tied up and taken out of the hands of the Bank. He thought he saw, most distinctly, the different steps by which the present system was produced. In 1824, he saw an undue issue of paper on the part of the Bank, and much of that issue placed out of the reach of their own control. He then saw a powerful effect produced on the state of prices throughout the country by the extension of the country-bank circulation, which was incidental to the state of things then existing, and the facility afforded for the issue of paper. And then, in 1825, came that heigh-day of public prosperity which they had been taught to believe was never to have an end. Parliament was then induced to congratulate his majesty, and his majesty in return, to congratulate the parliament, on so apparently sound, permanent, and prosperous a state of affairs.—Now, when he was told, that the approach of all the subsequent mischief was seen by his majesty's ministers, however much he concurred with them in the remedy which they now proposed, he could not express that concurrence without, at the same time, throwing some blame on the government, for not having, if they had foreseen the evil, applied to it those measures which, at a late period, they had felt it necessary to adopt. At the very moment, however,

when all this mischief was in progress—when the worst evils were afloat—when the one and two pound country notes were in active circulation—and when the exchanges were beginning to turn against this country, he found his majesty, at the close of the session, thus addressing the two Houses, on the subject of the measures which had been adopted, for the purpose of extending our commercial relations:—"These measures, his majesty is persuaded, will evince to his subjects in those distant possessions, the solicitude with which parliament watches over their welfare; they tend to cement and consolidate the interests of the colonies with those of the mother country; and his majesty confidently trusts that they will contribute to promote that general and increasing prosperity on which his majesty had the happiness of congratulating you on the opening of the present session, and which, by the blessing of Providence, continues to pervade every part of his kingdom." Now, he did not mean to contend, that there was not much prosperity in the country; that there were not materials upon which solid and permanent prosperity might be founded; but he would complain, that at the very moment when this Speech was made, notwithstanding the avowed knowledge of his majesty's ministers, that there was great mischief brewing, with respect to the state of the currency, parliament was suffered to separate, in July, 1825, without any step being taken to alter the state of the currency, so as to prevent the frightful misfortunes which had since occurred. If any step had then been taken, it would have been impossible for the evil to have reached the height which it attained in the autumn of that year. He therefore could not concur in the measures proposed, without expressing some regret that no provision was made at that time for retracing those steps which parliament had been induced to take in 1822, for the purpose of throwing into circulation that addition to the issues of the country banks which some individuals believed to be absolutely necessary. It was now proposed to deal with the one and two pound notes; but, he thought, nothing completely effectual could be done while there was so great a portion of the issues of the Bank of England locked up and placed beyond the control of that body. The lessons which they had received for the last three years clearly proved the great importance of placing the entire currency of the country on a broad metallic basis. For any other purpose he was quite sure that the interference of parliament could produce nothing but mischief. Whenever parliament attempted to give a fictitious aid to the currency, the attempt had uniformly failed. There was no royal, there was no parliamentary, road by which they could contract engagements, beyond what they had the means and power of fulfilling. The attempt to bolster up a bad system of currency was always attended with extreme difficulty, and never could succeed. All those who looked to the history of past years would see, that every effort to interfere with the currency, except that which had for its object the introduction of a permanent metallic circulation, proved the folly of the principle on which the attempt proceeded, and led to effects of the most mischievous character. No sooner had that famous resolution been passed some years ago, ascribing to the bank note a value that did not belong to it, than the evil of such a monstrous proceeding became manifest. He adverted to that resolution with less hesitation than he would otherwise have done, because he understood it was not, as had been supposed, the offspring of a noble friend of his (lord Bexley) now present. That noble lord, however, had taken up and adopted the foundling; and he it was who gave it that existence, in the Journals of the other House of parliament, to which it was by no means entitled. No sooner was that unfortunate resolution adopted by the other House, which declared that a pound note and a shilling were equal in public estimation to a guinea, than parliament was employed, and had continued to be so employed ever since, in providing against the consequence which necessarily arose from the difference that manifested itself between the value of the one pound note and the golden sovereign, in this and in every other country. No paper ought to be tolerated, except that which could be promptly and easily converted into gold. He certainly approved of the measures which the noble earl proposed for removing one portion at least of the paper circulation of the country; because it would afford that security to the poorer classes which should be a primary object with the legislature. The labourer had a right to reap the full benefit of the king's prerogative; and when he demanded the reward of his labour and his industry, he ought to receive it in that circulating me-

dium which possessed a real, not a nominal, suspicious, and fluctuating value. The withdrawal of those notes would also materially alter the relation between the proportion of metallic and paper circulation; and unless it did that, he was sure that no benefit would result from the measure; and if the suppression of the one and two pound notes were not adequate to the accomplishment of that object, then he would recommend that parliament should proceed still further.—With respect to the other measure which was more immediately the object of the present proceeding—the formation of a different description of country banks—he certainly was one of those who thought that, in its present form, that measure would not be very extensively acted upon. But he sincerely hoped to find the scheme placed upon a more practicable footing; and that the Bank, which professed, and no doubt felt, a deep sympathy for the distresses of the country, when it became satisfied that it could not, by establishing branch banks, afford the relief desired under its own system, would not resist such an alteration in its charter as, without at all affecting its material rights, would substitute a sound and secure system of banking for an unsound and dangerous one, in places which their own circulation could never reach.—He did not doubt that, upon reflection, such would be the policy adopted by the Bank; and that parliament, by that alteration in the Bank charter, would be enabled to license chartered banks throughout the country; the condition of whose charter of limited responsibility being the annual publication of those accounts, all persons would have an opportunity of constant examination into the affairs of the parties whom they trusted; and the country would have, perhaps, the best system of banking which commercial interest and security could desire. To such a change of system, at all events, at the natural expiration of the Bank-charter, he looked for a relief from that dangerous species of circulation which at present filled the country—a circulation under which no man knew, when he accepted a country note, scarcely whom he trusted, and never what he had to rely upon. With reference to Scotland and Ireland, where none of the evil under which our own country was suffering was found at present to exist, a greater space of time might perhaps be allowed for effecting the proposed change, than that which he understood the noble earl to suggest; but he agreed with the noble earl in the propriety of ultimately bringing both those countries under the operation of the same system. The experiment of delay for a few years might be tried, parliament keeping a watchful eye in the interim, and holding itself ready to apply the remedy the moment any symptom of disease appeared; but, ultimately, he looked most certainly to the system generally being made the same. The noble marquis, in conclusion, said, that he should reserve till a future opportunity the expression of his opinions on the subordinate parts of the noble earl's plan. On the general question he felt no difficulty in saying, that their lordships were about to legislate in the right way, and on right principles. The fortune of every individual was intimately connected with the settlement of the currency on a sound metallic basis. He begged to assure their lordships, that, if by obtaining temporary high prices, they hoped to benefit either their friends or themselves, they would find themselves greatly mistaken: for such temporary rise would necessarily be followed by a dreadful and ruinous depression. It was not more sure that any artificial excitement or fever must, in the body natural, subside into ultimate langour and exhaustion, than that the bubbles of speculation blown up by paper, would finally bring all articles of merchandise into the market at lower prices than they would otherwise legitimately obtain. If, therefore, on the score of justice, the parliament was not called upon to legislate, they were bound to do so in defence of their own interests, which were essentially bound up with that regularity and uniformity of prices which were the proper object of all legislation. They ought to enter upon this duty with the resolution to avoid the crisis heretofore admitted, and to adhere without deviation, to the path of sound principle, and, above all, with a determination to reduce and limit, instead of enlarging and increasing, that complicated relation between the government, the public, and the Bank, in which they were mixed up, by the present state of the currency.

Lord *Bexley* said, that he should not have trespassed on their lordships' attention, were it not that some allusion had been made to him by the noble marquis. With regard to the practical measure now proposed, he hoped it would not prove so defective as the noble lord opposite seemed to anticipate. He thought it

would ultimately have the effect of correcting, to a great extent, the evil complained of. He could not think that the late difficulties were entirely to be attributed to the present banking system. When so great a proportion of the country banks still remained in a flourishing condition, they must, he thought, look for the origin of the evil in some other source; and he thought it would be found in the spirit of speculation that had taken possession of the country. The system, however, of joint-stock banking companies was one which he wished to see gradually established. The probable effect of this measure might be judged of from what had taken place in Ireland, within a very short period. In that country an alteration had been effected in the charter of the Bank, and the consequence was, that many joint-stock companies had been established, and were now, to the great convenience of the public, in full operation. The circulation of Ireland had thus undergone a material alteration for the better, particularly in the very important circumstance of security. There was no reason to despair of similar results here, when the proposed alteration took place in the charter of the Bank. It should be recollected that, not many years back, the shock which took place in Ireland, and the difficulties in its pecuniary transactions, arising from the failure of country banks, was much greater than it had been even here. It soon, however, recovered that shock, and, under the improved system, there was little probability that it would occur again. He wished to say a word or two with reference to the temporary relief which it was proposed to afford by the purchase of Exchequer-bills. On this point he differed from the noble lord opposite. He felt convinced that it must have a very beneficial effect. It should be remembered, that the difficulty to be provided against was a present deficiency in the circulating medium. Now, the effect of buying up Exchequer-bills by the Bank, would be to throw into circulation a considerable sum. However the Bank might increase its circulation, whether by issuing their paper upon discounts, or in the purchase of Exchequer-bills, the effect must be the same. The money, which thus got into circulation, would not remain with the individuals who sold the Exchequer-bills, but would, in no long time, find its way through all the various channels of trade. The relief thus afforded was more effectual and more speedy, than if government had come to the determination of issuing the same amount of Exchequer-bills, as had been done in former cases, when similar difficulties prevailed. If the latter course had been determined upon, it could not have been carried into effect without considerable delay. It must have undergone inquiry, and could not have been acted upon without the previous sanction of the legislature. Though quite confident that much good, must have resulted from either course, still, in the existing state of circumstances, he thought the wiser one had been adopted. The difference between them was, that by the operation of one, a large amount of currency must be immediately brought into circulation. This would not have been so in the other case. Besides, the course pursued had this advantage, that it was not, in fact, a measure of government, but of the Bank. In the observations which had fallen from the noble marquis, with respect to the conduct of the Bank, he fully concurred. They merited all the praise which had been bestowed upon them. During the many years he filled a public situation, he had frequent opportunities of intercourse with the directors, on matters connected with the most important public interests, and he had abundant opportunities of becoming acquainted with their integrity, their good faith, and their excellent management of the affairs committed to their charge. He could not admit, as had been contended, in the course of the debate, that the Bank were put to any inconvenience in consequence of their advances to government, or that they had thereby been prevented from coming forward to relieve the late difficulties in the money market. The securities they held from government might have been paid off, at any time within the last two years, or they might, if necessary, have sold them, to any extent they pleased. They might have sold the Exchequer-bills in their hands, or they might have brought the annuities connected with the half-pay and pensions to market, if they thought it necessary to dispose of a part of them. Upon this last part of their transactions with the government, the noble marquis had commented with great severity. In the first place, the noble marquis said, that, in the same year in which parliament had laid on taxes to the amount of three millions for the reduction of the national debt, and the relief of posterity, the charge

of the naval and military pensions, which ought to have fallen on the present generation, was spread over a period of forty years for their relief. The fact was, that the three millions were imposed, in pursuance of a resolution of the House of Commons, passed so long ago as the year 1819. But, the Bank had taken no part of the annuity until four years afterwards. The plan of the annuity was not formed till 1822, when such an improvement had taken place in the finances of the country, as rendered it decidedly an advantageous measure at that time, whatever it might have been in 1819. The noble lord then proceeded to exculpate himself and his colleagues from the imputation of having contributed, by the act of 1822, to give a longer period to the circulation of small notes. It was perfectly true, that, in his official capacity he had with great regret proposed the bill, but he had accompanied it with another measure, which, if it had passed, would greatly have limited the mischiefs that had accrued. The noble lord then explained the character of the measure to which he was referring, and of another which he brought forward in 1818, having for its object to restrict the issue of small notes to such bankers as would give security. He objected to the power of issuing small notes, on the principle, that it was tantamount to the dangerous power of coinage to an unlimited extent. He entirely agreed with the noble marquis that the present was the most suitable and advantageous period that could be selected for the change. In justice and in mercy to the country bankers themselves, parliament was bound not to lose this opportunity. If they were allowed to revert to their former circulation, the pressure would be greater, when they were at any subsequent time called upon to contract it. At present, too, they would save the proportion of stamp duties they would otherwise be called on to pay. The quantity of gold required to supply the place of the notes would be small in proportion to the contraction of the circulation. Three or four millions would be all that would be called for, in the course of three years, to provide for the country circulation. Surely, that was not a sum, which could excite any great alarm. The measures, now proposed, were, he was satisfied, calculated to put the currency of the country on a solid foundation, and to prevent, for the future, all ruinous fluctuations of prices.

Lord *Ellenborough* said, he could not give his assent to the measures now before parliament, without expressing his opinions freely with regard to them. The measures at present proposed, as he understood them, were three: one intended to afford immediate relief; and the other two to prevent a recurrence of the calamities under which the country laboured. His chief objection to the measure for present relief was, that it would not relieve those who were most deserving of it, and that, while it would relieve some, it would necessarily injure others. For example, while it relieved those, who would not convert their Exchequer-bills into cash at a discount, it injured the banks that had been obliged to sell them during the height of the panic. There was no proof of the want of a circulating medium. It was more extensive now than at the end of 1824; yet, the object of government was, to increase it, when its very extent was alleged as one of the causes of the distress. The great cause of distress was, that people were all called on to pay what they owed, at the same time, and much sooner than they expected. It pervaded every class and description of persons. He knew not by what means relief could be administered; but he was sure that the measure of the noble earl would not reach those who were innocently involved in the calamities that pressed on the country. But, the noble lords on the Treasury bench were not agreed as to the character of their own measures. The noble earl had admitted, that the measure relative to the country banks was only a half measure, and had expressed his regret that he could not grant charters to the many joint-stock companies at once, while the noble lord who spoke last regarded the measures as of the greatest importance, and was only afraid that too great a number of joint-stock banks would be instituted. For his part, the events of the last two or three years, he confessed did not induce him to look at joint-stock companies with a favourable eye. He was not, therefore, sorry at the delay which must take place in the full completion of the measures; and, therefore, he thought no injury would result from the circumstance of these new companies not being able immediately to obtain charters. When the period fixed by law arrived, the materials would be provided for establishing them on an extended basis. He trusted no events would occur to prevent his majesty's ministers

from following up the course on which they had entered. No man evidently thought more deeply on the subject than the noble earl at the head of the Treasury, nor felt greater apprehensions from the present state of things. As it was impossible to doubt, that the noble earl was in favour of a system of restriction, it was to be regretted that into the present bill, out of which joint-stock banking companies might arise, a provision had not been inserted for the purpose of restricting such companies in their operations. The measure for putting an end to the circulation of small notes at the end of three years, was a measure only of justice and humanity to the poorer classes, and therefore he highly approved of it; but, still, approving of it entirely, as far as its operation went, it was not, he thought, a measure which would reach to the causes of the existing mischief. For, if the noble earl at the head of government, looked at the papers on the table, he would find, that of 3,000,000*l.* of country-bank paper, issued between last year and the year before, scarcely 1,000,000*l.* had been issued in notes under 5*l.* Therefore, the putting an end to the circulation of 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes was not going far enough. To him it appeared idle to talk of the convertibility of notes into gold, while our system of country banking remained upon its present footing. If that system was allowed to go on, his firm persuasion was, that the country banks must ruin the Bank of England itself. In February of the last year, the Bank of England, seeing the foreign exchanges against us, had taken the just course to correct that mischief, by calling in more than 3,000,000*l.* of their issues. What was the consequence? Why, that the country banks had immediately advanced their issues, for every pound which the Bank of England had withdrawn. Under such a system, it was physically impossible for the Bank to prevent foreign exchanges from being against us. At present, the Bank was compelled to take the risk, not only of its own trading, but of the trading of all the country banks. Its situation was one of great difficulty, and he was surprised how it had acquitted itself so well. It was absolutely necessary to the safety of the country, that the currency should be placed upon a solid foundation. He was quite sure that the noble earl must feel deep apprehension on the subject; and he trusted that after the present alarm had passed away—with seven years of delay for consideration, before the Bank charter would expire—that noble lord would propose some definitive scheme which should give confidence for the future. The convulsions which the country had sustained under the old system, did mischief far beyond any actual loss that was sustained. It was said that, by the recent failures, the country would lose 2,000,000*l.* in money; but, the real mischief was in the derangement in the transfers of property which such accidents produced. He viewed the whole of this subject as of the highest importance to the safety of the country; and he trusted that the noble earl, with all the authority which belonged to him, as head of the government, and in virtue of his great talents and personal integrity, would boldly face the subject, and come down to parliament, with some comprehensive plan for establishing a firm and solid system of banking.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that no clamour, no fear of the resistance they might meet with, would prevent his majesty's ministers from doing their duty fully with respect to this important subject. He trusted that their recent conduct was evidence of their resolution not to shrink from the task which they had prescribed to themselves. As to the mode of relief, to which the noble lord had objected, his opposition probably arose from his not having turned his attention to questions of that nature, and therefore not seeing the full bearing and operation of the course pursued by government. What was the state of the country? A general want of confidence. It was not that there was not the money; but every man shut up his resources, and looked only to himself. Many banks had already ceased to issue notes, though they had still the power to do so; and, in many other parts the public had absolutely refused to take them. There was a general want of confidence, and consequently a want of money. If the object of government had been merely to relieve the holders of Exchequer bills, it would have been highly improper; but the object was to throw two millions of money into active circulation, by which means they expected to relieve the country better than in any other way. If the noble lord had attended to the questions of the circulation, in 1819, he would have known, that in the committee of that House, their lordships had obtained lights

on the subject which never shone on them before. They mostly, he believed, went into the committee, thinking that the issues of the Bank for the purchase of Exchequer bills were much less beneficial to the country than the issues for discounts; but they all came out of that committee satisfied, that there was no difference, in the end, as to the effect, whether the issues were in discounts or in government securities, whether they went in the first instance to particular individuals or the public at large. The Bank, it was known, had always acted with the greatest impartiality; but he spoke on high authority when he said, that whether relief was given by one means or by the other, precisely the same effect was produced. The greatest relief that could be given in the most satisfactory and safest way, would be given by the measure that had been adopted. It was not a measure of government, so much as of the Bank; although, he admitted, that it had been adopted with the advice of government; and he, for his part, was ready to take whatever responsibility attached to that advice. And if an addition was, by this measure, made to the circulation of the country, and a facility afforded to a relief of the present pecuniary embarrassments, it would be but fair to repay an equivalent to the Bank for the advances it had made in this way. The circulation of the Bank of England had been frequently, but erroneously, referred to, to determine the amount of the exchanges of the country. This was a mistake of the first Bullion committee. That committee considered the exchanges to depend upon the circulation of the Bank of England; whereas, they did not depend upon the circulation of the Bank alone, but on the circulation of the Bank, and that of the country generally. The whole paper of the country should be taken into consideration. As a proof that this was the case, he remembered a conversation which he had with the noble earl (Lauderdale), in which he remarked, that although the circulation of the Bank was then higher than it had ever been; it was then so high as twenty-eight millions—yet that all the exchanges were in our favour. Upon this remark of his the noble earl observed, that as the Bank increased its circulation, the notes of country bankers were withdrawn from circulation. This was a just observation. and satisfied him, that the whole of the circulation of the country, in the determination of the exchanges, should be taken into consideration. Although the circulation of the Bank of England was at present high, yet it was not so high as perhaps for the good of the country, it might be. The exchanges, after all, were what it was most important to attend to; more so than the price of gold, as that was variable, and not easily to be determined. The great object, however, at present, was, to throw money into circulation throughout the country generally, and that would be more effectually done, in his opinion, by the present measure, than by any other that could be resorted to. It was a far more effectual one than any specific plan that might be suggested for throwing money into the hands of a certain class of individuals. It was a simple measure—a natural measure—and one, in every respect, preferable to that which had been proposed instead of it.

The bill was then read a second time. After which, the earl of Liverpool moved, that it be committed on Monday.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, February 17.

CONDUCT OF MR. KENRICK IN THE CASE OF FRANKS.] The order of the day for going into a committee on the Charge against Mr. Kenrick was read. On the question, "That Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair,"

The *Speaker* said, that before he quitted the Chair, it was fit that the House should thoroughly understand the course to be pursued in the committee. If the committee were left without any instruction, it would be its duty not only to inquire into the charge by evidence, but to come to some resolution upon it, afterwards to be reported to the House; if, on the other hand, the committee, by a special instruction, were confined only to the taking of evidence, that evidence would be reported without the declaration of any opinion. Thus the result in the two cases would be different, and the course of proceeding would also materially vary. It would be observed also, that no speech from counsel could be heard, if the committee were only to take evidence, though the learned gentlemen might cross-examine the witnesses. If there were no restriction on the committee, and the whole subject were left open to its deliberation, then, of course, it would be its duty to listen to counsel on behalf of the party accused.

Mr. *Denman* wished the committee to inquire into the whole matter, and that Mr. Kenrick's counsel should have an opportunity of addressing the committee, when the evidence was gone through. He should think it his duty, after the inquiry was over, to propose certain resolutions.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* thought the better way would be to confine the committee to receiving the evidence. The House was aware that a judge was independent of the Crown, and could be removed only on an address from parliament. It was possible that the House might, in this instance, have to discharge that important duty. He merely supposed the possibility of such a contingency. Was it not, then, better that the House should have all the facts laid before it, and, on a full revision of the case, adopt such measures as were best calculated to answer the ends of justice?

Mr. *Denman* thought that justice would be more likely to be done, while the proceeding would be infinitely more satisfactory to all parties, if a committee of the whole House inquired into the case without restriction. Any address to the Crown to remove a judge, must of course be the act of the House; but he did not see why a committee should not so pursue the inquiry, as to arrive at a termination which warranted it in reporting its opinion. First, the proof of the charge would be given, and upon that proof the committee might or might not report the charge established. He did not, in fact, see how the whole inquiry could be disposed of otherwise, and could find no sufficient reason, why the reported opinion of the committee, as far as it was of value, should not have its weight with the whole House.

The *Speaker* again pressed upon the House the necessity of settling the course of proceeding. He had omitted to state, that if the committee went through the whole of the testimony, and registered its opinion in resolutions, those resolutions, as a matter of course, would be reported, but unaccompanied by the evidence. If, on the other hand, the committee were confined to the taking of evidence, that evidence would form the report, and the House might arrive at its own decision. It was true, that evidence could be laid upon the table upon the motion of any hon. member, but such a proceeding always implied a doubt as to the propriety of the determination of the committee.

Mr. *Peel* thought, that in so grave a case, it would be well for the House to reserve its power till after the committee. Suppose the committee should be of opinion, that though the individual had not acted quite correct, his conduct had not been so censurable as to call for his removal; would it not be desirable to avoid as much as possible casting a stigma upon a public functionary so placed? He thought, upon the whole, the better course would be for the committee to take the evidence, that being the sole duty devolving upon it, and then report it, the House reserving to itself any ulterior consideration. Of the case, he knew nothing, and was therefore free from prepossession and prejudice either way.

Mr. *Abercromby* saw no substantial difference between the two courses. The result, in either case, would, in his opinion, be the same; nor did he think that the accused party would be aggrieved by adopting the course suggested by his learned friend. Any case having reference to the administration of justice could not be inquired into with too much exactness. It ought to be thoroughly sifted; for if the opinions which had been broached were to be acted upon, namely, that the House was not authorised to inquire into the conduct of a judge, it would be deprived of one of its most wholesome and important functions.

Mr. *Denman* said, that another reason for requiring an opinion from the committee was, that in that case counsel might be heard before it in the same manner as his learned friend, Mr. Gurney, had been permitted to address the committee of last session.

The *Speaker* said, that in either case counsel might be heard: they could be heard before the committee, if the committee were to report their opinion, or before the House, if the House reserved to itself the consideration of the evidence.

The Hon. *William Lamb* said, he could not discover in what way this particular charge was connected with Mr. Kenrick's public character, or judicial duties. In the former inquiry, there was at least an allegation that Mr. Kenrick, as a magistrate, had been guilty of a denial of justice; a public wrong was thus done, and a private injury sustained. When, however, the House was now told, that it was its solemn duty to watch over

the conduct of judges, he could not help adverting to the point, how far the judicial conduct of the party accused was involved in this question. He had never held so absurd a doctrine, as that the official acts of judges ought not to be investigated by the House; but he begged leave to state, that he should be sorry to see the censorial power of prying into the private lives and domestic affairs of judges, vested in any body of men, and of all bodies of men, he should be most sorry to see it exercised by the House of Commons, where the power was so likely to be abused, and made the instrument of the most iniquitous tyranny. He had no connection with, and felt no prejudice in favour of Mr. Kenrick. He was only anxious to avoid the establishment of so dangerous a precedent—a precedent which might, at some future period, be applied to the ruin of an innocent, but an unpopular and obnoxious individual. He did not feel inclined to resist the motion, that the Speaker leave the chair; but he thought it would be much wiser if the House, in this stage, dropt the proceeding altogether. He did not see that the party supposed to have sustained the wrong, would thus be materially injured; and it seemed to him, that one part of the charge, namely, that which related to the compromise, was a matter of daily occurrence. Juries were frequently desired to find parties not guilty, when the evidence was strong against them, because some arrangement had been made; and he much doubted whether his learned friend himself had not been, in the course of his practice, a party to them. If the House were now to abandon the charge, it would require no explanation; because every man of discrimination and understanding would always see on the face of the accusation ample and manifest reasons for relinquishing the proceeding [hear, hear!]. He had not intended to have offered an amendment, but finding himself supported in his view of the case, he should move, "That this House will not proceed further in the matter of the said Charge."

Colonel *Wood* seconded the amendment. All he knew of the case had been gathered from the votes. He was quite at a loss as to the capacity in which Mr. Kenrick was charged. In the accusation he was spoken of, indeed, as a magistrate and a Welch judge. But, of what had he been guilty in those characters? The House was not precluded from such inquiries, but to enter upon them lightly was to open a wide and dangerous door. The best and safest course would be to proceed no further.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* wished to state the reason why he should support the original motion. If the case were entirely a new one, and now brought forward for the first time, he should, as he had said on a former night, feel very much disposed to concur in opinion with his hon. friend, that the proceeding was inexpedient. But, he could not come to that conclusion now. They had permitted the charge to lie on their table. They had so far committed themselves for inquiry; and the learned gentleman had consented to postpone that inquiry, at his suggestion, from the last session, without the least hint given to him, that there was any intention to mar his proceeding in a later stage. In candour, therefore, he could not now interpose an obstacle, however impressed he might be with the injurious tendency of the precedent. He did not, however, see that this was exactly a private or domestic transaction, with which it was clearly beyond their province to interfere. No doubt the learned gentleman meant to impute malice to Mr. Kenrick in Franks case, and in the discharge of his public duty. Beset as he felt the proceeding was with dangers and difficulties, still he could not refuse his assent, under the circumstances in which he was placed, to the learned gentleman's motion.

Mr. *Scarlett* felt that the present charge was only part of the proceeding of last session. From professional connexion with the parties, he had, from the first, been unwilling to say one word upon the subject; and he should have been deeply impressed with what had fallen from the hon. member for Hertford, if the present accusation had stood alone. One part of it was for a malicious prosecution, and the other for a libel; and for both, the ordinary tribunals of the country afforded sufficient remedies. Franks might bring his action for a malicious prosecution, if the prosecution were malicious; or he might proceed for damages for a libel, if the publication complained of were libellous. He agreed fully with the hon. member for Hertford as to the nature of the charge; he had never, indeed, read it until that moment, but he found that Mr. Kenrick was not accused in it, either as a magistrate or as a judge. He could easily

foresee that the House might be involved in some difficulty by entertaining it. Suppose the evidence having been gone through, the House should find the accusation true, and Franks, encouraged by the resolution, should bring his action; the jury might find a verdict for the defendant, and thus the decision of the House and of a court of justice would be in direct opposition. He did not mean, that the decision of a jury would be conclusive against the House, or prove that the House had been wrong in its hasty resolution; but he pointed out the manner in which the decisions might clash, in order to show the inconvenience that might result from entering upon the question at all.

Mr. *S. Bourne* said, that as far as he understood the charge, it did not at all imply malice. It alleged that Mr. Kenrick had preferred an accusation against Franks without sufficient proof; yet it went on to state, that the proof was so sufficient as to induce a magistrate to commit, and a grand jury to find a true bill. Thus, then, it was evident, that the only tangible accusation against Mr. Kenrick was for publishing a libel; but he had not published it, either in his character of a magistrate or a judge. If, indeed, the House had already committed itself on the subject, he should not feel himself at liberty to vote against proceeding further with the inquiry; but it seemed to him, that it was only to investigate the moral character of an individual, and that the precedent about to be established was full of danger.

Mr. *Denman* expressed much surprise at the course which the discussion had taken. It could not be forgotten, that the charge had been placed upon the Journals in the last session; that long previous notice had been given of it; that papers had been laid upon the table; and that the grounds laid for the motion were quite unconnected with the private conduct of Mr. Kenrick. That gentleman had thought proper to apply for a criminal information against a newspaper for some comments upon his magisterial conduct, and he had put in several affidavits, in one of which was this gross libel upon Franks. Was this a private proceeding, or were the materials of accusation taken from an opponent? No; they were publicly and voluntarily furnished in a court of justice by Mr. Kenrick himself. They were in consequence, repeated in thousands of newspapers throughout the country. To say of such a proceeding, that it was an inquisition into a man's private and domestic life, was very much like a perversion of fact. He denied that the transaction had any thing in it of a private character; it was, on the contrary, a most gross act of public oppression, and a great perversion of justice. To say that such things were frequently done by professional men in compromises for their clients was incorrect. For any barrister to have acted so, would have been most disgraceful; and he could assure his hon. friend, that he had never, in his professional course, tolerated such a practice. He was also quite surprised at what had fallen from his hon. and learned friend (Mr. Scarlett), who had warned them against proceeding, because, forsooth, it was possible they might decide one way, and a jury afterwards another. If that argument were valid, there would be an end altogether to parliamentary control; for, in almost every case in which their jurisdiction could be called for, the parties might possibly have a legal remedy elsewhere. He repeated, that he impugned Mr. Kenrick upon his public act—upon that affidavit, the libellous contents of which proclaimed a calumny, to the serious injury of an individual who had already been oppressed for a supposed act of felony. He admitted, that he was bound to show a malicious motive; for without that the libel might be no crime. There were libels in a legal sense, he knew, that brought down punishment upon the writers, although, in a moral sense, they entitled them to the highest praise. But, what mitigation was there in this case? Here was a man who first prosecuted his neighbour as a felon, and, then failing in the attempt, afterwards endeavoured to run him down by a libel, stating false facts to his prejudice. Ought such a person to be permitted to continue in the administration of justice? Mr. Kenrick had thought proper to charge four facts against this poor and unhappy man, every one of which he undertook distinctly to prove false and calumnious. Was the House to look on, and see such acts perpetrated by a public functionary, who was bound to administer strict justice? If they were prepared to sit merely for the gratification of their own individual pursuits and the promotion of their own interests, they might do so, and risk their character with the public. He would ask them, whether there

could be any duty more important than that of keeping the judgment-seat clear from stain, of preventing its occupancy by those who could only sit there to disgrace it? If they were prepared to admit this, and make such conduct a stepping-stone to promotion, or a protection for guilt, then, in God's name, let them avow that determination in the face of the public, and dispose of his motion as they pleased. So long, however, as he had a seat in the House, he was determined to do his duty. The argument of some hon. members would go this length — that all propriety, all moderation, all decorum, might be banished from the bench, without requiring the interference of that House. Would this indifference on the part of the House render the office of judge more respectable in the estimation of the public? He contended that, by the act of Settlement, it was the duty of the House to examine the conduct of judges, if notoriously improper, even on matters which affected their private character. If open scandal arose from the private conduct of a judge, which would be prejudicial to the administration of justice in his person, the House was bound to inquire into the affair. The conduct of the learned person, the subject of the present discussion, had been made public by his own voluntary act, in bringing the matter before a court of justice; and it was, therefore, such that the House could not omit to notice it.

Mr. *Scarlett* said, that his argument did not go the length of asserting, that all moderation and decorum might be banished from the bench, and yet no public inquiry should take place by that House. He would admit, that the private conduct and actions of judges might in some cases become the subject of parliamentary inquiry; but these were extreme cases. If a judge was guilty of a libel, the law would reach him as well as any other person; and where that remedy might be had, he did not think, except in extreme cases, the House should interfere in matters affecting private conduct.

Mr. *Stuart Wortley* thought the present case rather a curious one for the interference of the House. He would admit that the House might be called upon to interfere in certain cases, but he thought the present was not one of them. According to the statement of the hon. and learned mover, the first two parts of his charge were not offences of Mr. Kenrick, nor offences at all. It was another magistrate by whom the man was committed. Then, as to inducing a man to plead guilty, it was a thing done every day. What was more common than to ask a man accused of forgery to plead guilty to the minor offence? In these there was nothing of which that House or any tribunal could take cognizance. He objected to the motion, because he thought it would lead to a very bad precedent. He should be sorry to see the House of Commons made judges of libel. The House took that office with respect to its own privileges; and though he did not think that, even in such a case, they were at all times the best judges, yet they did claim that power, and would allow no other party to be judges of it but themselves. God forbid, however, that they should ever become the judges of the question of libel in private cases; for he considered that they would be the worst possible judges of such matters. From the very nature of the case, they must be prejudiced. He would therefore advise the twelve learned gentlemen to let the question of libel be decided by a jury of twelve men, and then, fortified with their verdict, if he should obtain it, let him come to that House with a motion respecting the conduct of Mr. Kenrick, and they would no doubt deal with the case as it might require. Having this view of the case, he felt obliged to the hon. member for Hertford for having moved the amendment; for, as long as he had a seat in that House, he would never consent to a vote which would make it the judges of libels between individuals.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, he did not know any thing of the merits of the case; but whenever a matter affecting the conduct of a judge came before them, he thought it was their duty to institute an inquiry. The doctrine held by hon. members who opposed this motion, would have the effect of shutting out the exercise of one of the most valuable of their functions. He thought it was not too much to say, that if an individual, by acts of his own, had given notoriety to certain parts of his conduct, and those parts were of such a character as that, after they became known, no minister would dare to recommend him to the Crown to fill the office of judge — it was not, he repeated, too much to say, that the same acts being committed by a person who already held the office of judge, the House was bound, by the act of Settlement, to make them the subject

of inquiry. Was it denied that the judges, who had to decide on questions affecting the lives and property of the king's subjects, ought to be men of pure and unblemished character? And, if this was important to the due administration of justice, was it too much to ask, that inquiry should be made, when charges affecting the character of a judge in a very serious manner, though not in his judicial capacity, were brought before the House? Some gentlemen, who thought it beneath them to protect the purity of the administration of justice, might wish to get rid of all inquiry; but he took a very different view of his duties as a member of that House, and of the importance of the matter before them; and he thought it would be no excuse for their neglect of this subject to say, that the House had already decided on a former case affecting the gentleman whose name was mentioned. This case was the following up of that which they had before them last session. It might be a matter of regret that they were not both together; but that ought not to hinder them from being considered as affecting the character of the individual, as to his fitness for being continued in the office of judge. Taking the two cases together (should the present charge be made out), the question would be, was the conduct of this gentleman, on the whole, such as that no minister would recommend his appointment as a judge; and if not, ought he to be continued in that situation? He did not mean to say it followed that, because he could not now be recommended to the office, he ought therefore not to be continued in it; but the question, as was properly observed by the right hon. secretary, was one of degree; and it would be for the House, considering all the circumstances of both cases, to say, whether they were such as should induce them to send up any address to the Crown on the subject of this gentleman's removal from office. As to the case itself, he would not go into it; but he thought it was almost impossible, that any man could read the charges, and not say there was a case for serious investigation. He regretted to find that it was viewed so lightly by some hon. members, or that they should feel disposed to throw so important a duty from their own shoulders.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* observed, that of all the questions which came under the consideration of that House, those which partook of a judicial character were the questions on which every hon. member must act on his own individual impression. Without at all entering into the merits of the case itself, he was desirous briefly to state the grounds on which he should vote against the amendment, and for the hon. and learned gentleman's motion. If the question were now brought forward for the first time, he might, perhaps, be inclined to agree with those who were of opinion, that there was not that in the charge on the table, which ought to induce the House to enter into the consideration of the subject. But, he could not forget that a proceeding, of which this was a part, was received and countenanced by the House last session; nor could he forget, that he was one of those who concurred in inducing the hon. and learned gentleman to postpone that proceeding to the present; without, of course, entertaining the slightest intention of interposing any obstacle to that proceeding, whenever the hon. and learned gentleman might think proper to bring it forward. He therefore found himself compelled, by a sense of consistency, in this view of the case (although he did not know what he might have done, were the subject now an original one), to abstain by his vote from throwing any impediment in the way of a proceeding, which the learned gentleman, for the convenience of public business, had last session consented to stay. This was certainly not more than the learned gentleman had a right to expect in return for his courtesy.

Mr. *Denison* said, he had just had a communication with Mr. Kenrick in the lobby, who had told him, that he was perfectly prepared to meet the charge preferred against him, but would cheerfully submit to any course the House might think proper. He entirely concurred in the sentiments of the hon. member for Yorkshire; there was one observation, however, in the speech of the learned member for Calne, on which he must make a single remark. That learned member had supposed, that Mr. Kenrick's magisterial character would influence the committing magistrate to commit the person against whom he preferred the charge, and would afterwards influence the grand jury to find the bill. Now, really he thought the learned member knew the law too well not to be aware that no committing magistrate would have dared so to act, liable as he would be to severe punishment for his conduct; and

that it was not probable the grand jury, who were on their oaths, would be induced, by fear or affection, to commit gross and deliberate perjury.

Mr. *Wynn* said, that if the hon. member for Hertford pressed his amendment to a division, he should vote for it. He could not concur with those gentlemen who thought that this charge was a necessary sequel of the charge of last session. They were quite distinct, and he thought it would be injustice to Mr. Kenrick for hon. members to allow their opinions on this case to be influenced by what took place on that occasion. The ground on which the case of last session went was, that if it could be proved that this gentleman had acted improperly in his character as a justice of the peace, that ought to be a reason why he should be considered unfit to fill the higher office of a judge. The transaction in the present case did not affect him in his public capacity, but had reference to him solely as a private individual, for which he was liable, if he were in fault, to be called to account before the ordinary tribunals of the country. The House should recollect, that whatever might be their decision on this case, it would not ultimately rest with them alone. The concurrence of the other House would be necessary; and suppose that concurrence could not be obtained, what a situation would they be placed in, and what would be the painful situation of this individual, thus allowed to remain with the deep stain on his character, which a resolution of the House against him might imply? Would it not be a much better course for the House to confine itself to cases where guilt had been proved by the ordinary tribunals? He did not mean to say that there were not cases in which the House would be called upon to interfere, before any inquiry by the courts of law; but these were extreme cases, and it was most desirable that the principle applying to them should not be extended. He could not at all concur in the observation of the learned member for Calne, that if the character of an individual were such as that no minister would recommend him as a judge, that therefore (he being already a judge) he should not be allowed to continue to fill that situation. A judge held his situation quamdiu bene se gesserit; but the reasons for which he might be removed were, in general, founded upon his conduct as a judge. He did not say that cases might not arise, out of his private conduct, which would justify his removal; but the charge before the House was not, in his opinion, one of that description. Taking it for granted, for a moment, that the whole of the charge now preferred were clearly made out, he did not think it would justify the House in agreeing to an address for Mr. Kenrick's removal. One word as to the supposed pledge given by the House last session. He did not think that the postponement of the matter by general consent, implied a sanction of the propriety of its introduction in the present. Even after the charge was laid on the table, and the attendance of witnesses ordered, he thought the House were not precluded from reviewing their decision, and if reasons were shown, from coming to a resolution to proceed no further in the affair.

The House divided: for the original motion 81; for the amendment 42, majority 39.

The House having resolved itself into the committee, Mr. Robert Gordon in the chair,

Henry Peters, Esq. was called in; and examined by Mr. *Denman*, as follows:

Are you a magistrate for Surrey?—Yes.

Where do you reside?—At Betchworth-castle.

Is that near to where Mr. Kenrick resides?—About two miles.

Are you the magistrate before whom John Franks's daughter was brought on a charge of stealing from Mr. Kenrick's family?—I am.

How long is it since that charge was preferred?—It is a great many years; I should suppose seven or eight at least.

Do you remember what the age of Franks's daughter was at the time?—I do not recollect that I ever saw her; but I understood her to be about fourteen or fifteen.

Do you recollect the fact of a charge being preferred before you?—A charge was preferred, but, to the best of my recollection, I did not see the party, I think that I only granted a search warrant.

Do you recollect any evidence being brought before you to affect either Franks, the father, or the mother, with respect to the charge so preferred against their daughter?—Certainly not.

Were they charged before you, as abettors of their daughter, in the theft she was supposed to have committed?—Certainly not.

Are you the person who had some sheep stolen some years ago, when Franks was brought into some suspicion on that account?—I was.

Will you state shortly the circumstances?—

It so happens that I had two sets of sheep taken; there were two years elapsed between the two circumstances. The first was, that I had about thirty-eight sheep stolen, part of them out of a fold by the road side, near a footpath; the last were in the park. There were twenty sheep, I think, taken out of the fold, and there was a footpath leading from a house. There was a paper found by the side of the fold the day after the sheep were missed, and that paper evidently belonged to Franks, and that caused some little suspicion. I was in town myself; but my bailiff, in consequence, went to lord Rothes.

Your bailiff is here?—Yes, he is; this footpath leads from the place where Mr. Franks was working with a Mr. Browne, at the top of the hill. This footpath was in a direct road from where he was working to where he lived; there it was that the letter was found. That was the only suspicion that I ever had, or that ever was entertained of Franks having taken my sheep. Immediately after that, the man who had stolen the sheep was taken up, tried, and convicted.

Did you ever at any other time lose any sheep in which Franks ever incurred any suspicion at all?—About two years afterwards, I had, in another part of the farm, one sheep killed, and I believe taken away; another was wounded; but as to that, there was not the slightest ground of suspicion that I ever heard of against Franks.

Did you, at any time in August, 1824, receive a letter from Mr. Kenrick?—I did. I have got the letter here; but it bears no date except that of Sunday morning.

Is that in Mr. Kenrick's hand-writing?—I have not the least reason to doubt it; and I received it by his servant from him.

[The Letter was read as follows:]

"My dear Sir;—I returned home last night, and found the fair copy I send herewith, of the draft affidavit, which I hastily put together in the two days I could remain in the country, before I was obliged to set out on the circuit, after I was made acquainted with the attack made on me in the Morning Chronicle.

"My solicitor strongly recommends to me to apply to the different parties whose names are mentioned, to make affidavit of such facts as are stated in relation to them; and shall be therefore obliged by your perusing the second, third, fourth, and fifth sheets of this draft for me, if you will make an affidavit in confirmation of what is there stated.

"I have my doubts of the propriety of stating the circumstance about your two sheep, in pages four and five, and at all events it will not be necessary, if I should be advised or determine to retain that part, for you to enter upon it in your affidavit. I will call on you to-morrow, if you wish it.

"Pray return me the draft affidavit by the bearer, after you have read the pages mentioned, and the rest, if you please. I have directed the bearer to wait for it, if you are at home, any time you may wish. I am yours, truly,

"Sunday morning. W. Kenrick."

Was that letter accompanied by an affidavit?—It was.

Did you see Mr. Kenrick in consequence of that letter?—I did not, but I wrote him an answer to that letter.

Did you see Mr. Kenrick upon the subject of that affidavit?—I cannot say whether I did or not, it is so long ago; I very likely did, but I wrote him an answer to the letter decidedly at the time.

Did you keep a copy of the answer you sent?—No, I did not; I recollect perfectly well what I wrote, and I have no doubt Mr. Kenrick has got the answer.

Did you return the affidavit to Mr. Kenrick?—I did, with a letter.

Was it returned altered in any respect?—I think it very likely that I might have written my opinion upon parts of it; I recollect perfectly well having written a letter, or at least sent an answer.

What was that answer?—I said in that answer, that I did not think that I could make any affidavit to the facts he had alluded to, for that really the circumstances were all out of my recollection, with the exception of my having granted a search warrant; but with respect to the affair of Franks, I told him by all means not to state that, as there was not the slightest proof of Franks' having been guilty of that which he supposed he was. There is one thing I ought to explain, both for Mr. Kenrick's sake and my own. Till I read the letter this very morning, so little notion had I of Franks having any thing to do with the second sheep (and I only slightly suspected him of stealing the first), that I thought Mr. Kenrick alluded to the first; and I stated, therefore, that there was no evidence against him, but the piece of paper having been found, and therefore I said he ought not to put it in, because the real culprit had been taken up and convicted.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Gurney*.—Is not the constable who acted upon that occasion dead?—I never heard of any constable acting upon the occasion.

A man of the name of Rose?—Rose is dead; but whether he was constable or not, I really do not know.

Do you remember whether there was not a circumstance of a bloody knife as well as a piece of paper?—I never heard of a bloody knife, till either Mr. Kenrick or Mr. Wimburn mentioned it. I never heard of a bloody knife at the time; there was a space of two years between the time of my sheep having been stolen, and the one sheep having been killed; therefore the bloody knife could not be in the fold where the sheep were taken; and I am certain I never heard of a bloody knife at the time.

Examined by *Mr. Denman*.—Were any sheep

killed on the occasion of the first sheep stealing, when the paper was found?—No, there were not.

How many years ago was this affair of the sheep?—I should think somewhere about six or seven. I really cannot remember the year.

You have been a magistrate a good many years for the county of Surrey?—Yes, a great many years.

And residing in the neighbourhood of Franks?—Yes.

Was Franks ever brought before you, as a magistrate?—Never; I never heard his name mentioned before me as a magistrate.

[The Witness was directed to withdraw.]

Edward Arnold was called in, and examined by *Mr. Denman*, as follows:

Are you Mr. Peters's bailiff?—I am.

Do you know any thing of a charge against Franks's daughter, some years ago?—No, nothing.

Do you know of a suspicion that fell upon Franks with respect to stealing some of Mr. Peters's sheep?—When Mr. Peters's sheep were stolen, or after they were stolen, there was a paper found in the field; I took the paper to lord Rothes, and he said he could see nothing to justify him in granting a warrant to apprehend Franks. Mr. Kenrick said, that he thought there was a suspicion to grant a warrant against Franks; lord Rothes afterwards said, that he could see nothing to justify him to grant a warrant against Franks, for any other person might be going up the field, and taking their handkerchief out of their pocket, they might drop a paper out, and it might be carried there by the wind.

Were you the witness that went before lord Rothes, with respect to that business?—Yes, I was.

Was there any other circumstance to charge Franks, except the finding a piece of paper near the fold where the sheep were taken from?—No, nothing that I heard of.

Were any of those sheep killed?—There were none killed at the time those were taken.

Was there a bloody knife found?—Not that I know of.

Was there any other person afterwards tried and convicted of stealing those sheep?—Yes, a person of the name of Bignold.

Did you attend his trial?—I did; he was tried, I believe, before lord Ellenborough, at Lewes. He was found guilty, and afterwards transported for the said offence.

Did you ever hear of any other circumstance that fixed Franks with any suspicion of stealing any sheep of Mr. Peters's?—Not to my knowledge.

How long have you lived near Franks?—Ever since 1811, I have lived little better than a mile from him.

What character has Franks borne during all that time, as an honest and industrious man?—I know nothing in respect to Franks's character; for at the time our sheep were stolen, those sheep that were stolen out of the turnips, when the paper was found, I scarcely knew there was such a man except by name.

Since that time, have you ever had dealings with Franks?—Yes; I think the sheep were stolen in April, in the November following I sold him a sow.

[The Witness was directed to withdraw.]

John Franks was called in, and examined by *Mr. Denman*, as follows:

What is your name?—John Franks.

Where do you live?—At Alverston, near Stratford-on-Avon.

In whose service?—Lieut.-general Jenkinson's.

In what capacity?—As gardener; I have the care of all out of the house.

Did you live some years at Betchworth, in Surrey?—Yes.

You have a freehold there?—I have.

Do you recollect your daughter being taken before Mr. Peters, the magistrate, on a charge of stealing some articles at Mr. Kenrick's?—Yes, very well.

Did you attend before the magistrate at the same time?—I did.

Was any charge made against you, of being an abettor in that theft?—I do not know that there was any charge made against me, only Mr. Kenrick rose up in a passion, and told me, if he could get any hold of me, he would make a public example of me.

Were the articles missing found any where in your house?—They were.

In what part of the house?—In a little small box belonging to the girl herself.

How old was the girl at the time?—Nearly about ten years of age; I do not know to a month or two.

What were the articles that were found in the box?—I cannot say exactly, for I never saw them till I saw them in the room; but they were slips of silk, or something of that kind, and a bit of lace, and a pair of small scissors.

Were those things found in your bed-room?—They were beside the girl's bed; she sleeps in the same room.

Were they concealed any where?—No; only in a little deal box, where she kept a doll and other things; it was a box given her by her godfather.

The charge was dismissed, it was not prosecuted?—It was not.

Out of compassion, probably, to the youth of the child?—Yes, it was.

Did Mr. Peters say any thing to you on dismissing the charge?—Not that I recollect, he did not. Mr. Adams called to me, that was Mr. Kenrick's butler.

Was that before the magistrate?—It was just withoutside of the door in the passage; but he went in to the gentlemen, and sent the constable out after me to call me back.

You were sent to prison on a charge of stealing a piece of wood?—I was.

That was in the summer of 1824?—It was.

You were in prison two months on that charge?—Exactly.

Did you give your wife any authority to intercede with Mr. Kenrick to show you any lenity on that occasion?—Not at all; I never spoke to her any thing on the subject: the last thing I spoke to her when I went out of the house was, to be sure that the children did not make use of any ill language to any of Mr. Kenrick's people, though I was sent away.

Did you ever express any gratitude to Mr. Kenrick, or his bailiff, or any of his people, for his conduct to you in the course of that prosecution?—Not at all.

Is your wife here?—I do not know that she is, unless she has come in by the coach since I came down here.

[The Witness was directed to withdraw.]

The Counsel for Mr. Kenrick being asked what course they wished to pursue, Mr. Gurney stated, that he proposed to call a witness to deliver in certain documents.

Charles John Lawson, esq. was called in, and examined by *Mr. Gurney*, as follows.

What is your name?—Charles John Lawson.

You are clerk of the peace for the county of Surrey?—I am.

Are you possessed of the depositions taken by Mr. Burges, the magistrate who committed Franks?—I am.

Will you produce them? [The Witness produced the same, and they were read as follow:]

"*The King* against *John Franks*. The Information of James Scragg, of Betchworth, in the county of Surrey, labourer, and James Beal, of Betchworth aforesaid, yeoman, taken on oath before me, Ynyr Burges, esq. one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, acting in and for the said county of Surrey, this 14th of May, 1824.

"*James Scragg*—Says: I am a labouring man, and work for William Kenrick, esq. in Betchworth. About five weeks or a month ago, I was directed to clean out a ditch on Mr. Kenrick's land, and to take an elm slab from the saw-pit to stand upon in the ditch, which I did. When I had cleaned out the ditch, I drew the plank into a small meadow belonging to Mr. Kenrick, and left it there; and I cannot say that I have seen the slab since, till yesterday, when I saw it in the garden, in the occupation of John Franks, now in custody. The slab was wet and dirty when I had done with using it, which was the reason I did not take it back to the saw-pit; and I did not do so afterwards, because I had forgotten it. The elm slab now produced is the same slab which I used, and is the property of Mr. Kenrick. The mark ⋈ of

"James Scragg."

"*James Beal*, Sworn:—I am bailiff to William Kenrick, esq. of Betchworth; and directed the last witness, James Scragg, to take an elm slab, for the purpose of standing upon and cleaning out a ditch on Mr. Kenrick's land. This was about five weeks ago; and about a week ago I missed the slab, which had been used by Scragg, which had not been returned to the saw-pit. In the morning of yesterday, the 13th May instant, I saw an elm slab standing against a new building, in the garden of John Franks, in Betchworth, and near to his dwelling-house, and about one hundred yards from Mr. Kenrick's saw-pit. Having a suspicion that the slab I then saw was the property of Mr. Kenrick, I went to-day into the garden where the slab was still standing, and examined it, and found that it was the elm slab which had been used by the last witness, Scragg, and that it was the property of Mr. Kenrick; I then took the slab away, and took it to the timber yard, belonging to Mr. Kenrick, and fitted it to the piece of timber from which it had been sawed off. The pieces now produced are the two pieces of timber, that which I took from Franks's garden, and that I brought from the timber-yard, and which fit together. I am certain the piece of timber or slab I found in Franks's garden, is the property of William Kenrick, esq. and is of the value of one shilling. James Beal."

"John Franks, in his defence, says:—The piece of timber produced, is the piece which I set up upon my premises, but I do not know where it came from; I first saw it there about a fortnight ago. It was lying down, and I set it up. I made no inquiry about it, as to where it came from."

"Surrey. The Examination of John Franks, of Betchworth, in the county of Surrey, labourer, taken before me Ynyr Burges, esq. one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Surrey, this 14th day of May, 1824.

"This Examinant being charged before me the said Justice, on the oaths of James Scragg and James Beal, with having, on the 14th day of May, 1824, at the parish of Betchworth, in the county of Surrey, feloniously stolen and carried away one piece of elm timber of the value of one shilling, the property of William Kenrick, esq., on his examination now taken before me, saith, That he is not guilty of the offence aforesaid, though the piece of timber was on his (the Examinant's) premises; but how it came there, he this Examinant doth not know.

"John Franks."

During Franks's imprisonment for trial, did you receive a letter from Mr. Kenrick, respecting the stopping of the prosecution?—I did.

Will you produce the letter. [The Witness produced the same, and it was read as follows:]

"Dear Sir;—I wish to have a little of your advice, arising from your practical knowledge as clerk of the peace. John Franks was committed by Mr. Burges, of Ryegate, for stealing a plank, valued at one shilling, from me, a day or two after the late sessions, and of course has been in gaol nearly three months, a punish-

ment perhaps sufficient for such an offence. The man has, I learned, behaved very well since he has been in gaol. He has a large family, and is a member, and has been some time so, of a benefit club, the advantage of which, by one of their rules, he would forfeit on a conviction of felony. The facts are so short, and so very clear against him, that such conviction must I think follow. Though I cannot speak in favour of his character, I believe the confinement he has suffered will operate as much, and perhaps more in his reformation, than any further punishment the court might be disposed to award; and I am unwilling to inflict upon him and upon his family, for so it would be, the further consequential punishment of forfeiting the benefit he may be entitled to from his club, if I could avoid it. I do not know if Mr. Burges has returned to you the recognizances. Would the court, upon this statement, permit me to decline prosecuting, and cancel the recognizances? Would you enclose this to lord Middleton, or should I ask Mr. Burges to withdraw or not return the recognizances? I am desirous the man should not be punished beyond what he ought, and am willing to take any course it may be thought proper. I shall probably see Mr. Burges at the bench on Tuesday, after I get your answer, if you write by Monday's post.

"Yours truly,

"Broom, Dorking. W. KENRICK."

Did you transmit that letter to lord Middleton?—I did.

Lord Middleton was the chairman of the sessions, was he not?—He was.

Did you receive an answer from lord Middleton?—I received an immediate answer from lord Middleton.

In the negative?—Yes.

And you communicated that to Mr. Kenrick?—I did.

[The Witness was directed to withdraw.]

Mr. *Gurney* stated, that he had now concluded the evidence he proposed to adduce, and that he was desirous, either at the present or a future time, to address a few observations on behalf of Mr. Kenrick.

Mr. *Denman* apprehended, it would be infinitely better if the observations of his learned friend at the bar should be reserved until the evidence had been in the hands of members.

Dr. *Phillimore* concurred in the propriety of the course marked out by the learned gentleman.

The *Chairman* then asked the learned counsel whether they meant to produce any other evidence?

Mr. Gurney having replied in the negative, counsel were ordered to withdraw. The House resumed; the chairman reported progress; minutes of evidence were ordered to be printed; and the report was ordered to be taken into consideration on Tuesday.

NAVY ESTIMATES.] On the order of the day for going into a committee on the Navy Estimates,

Mr. *Hume* said, it appeared to him that the House was proceeding much too rapidly with respect to these estimates. He well knew, if ministers persevered in the course of expenditure which they had pursued for the last few years, the country would be little able to bear it, in the new circumstances in which it was placed. The House should be made acquainted with the amount which would be necessary for the army, navy, ordnance, and other establishments; as the amount of the last year had greatly exceeded those of former years. It might not be improper to recall the attention of the House to the fact, that in 1816, a committee had sat, composed, he might say, of his majesty's ministers—called the Finance Committee, and had reported, that the amount of the expenditure of the said establishments, after paying two millions to the India company, would not exceed 17,350,000*l.* It would be recollected, that the late lord Castlereagh had confidently pledged himself and the ministers, that after the arduous struggle in which the country had been engaged, the public expenditure should be reduced to the lowest, after 1818, and the committee had reported that 17,350,000*l.* would be adequate to a permanent establishment. It would be well for the House to inquire how things had been managed since; for they would scarcely believe, that each succeeding year had surpassed the expenses of the former; and that it was now three or four millions above that estimate. In 1818, the estimates were confidently stated to be 17,350,000*l.*; but on referring to the actual expenditure of that year, it would be found to amount to 19,136,000*l.* The next year it was 19,280,000*l.* In 1820, it was 19,280,000*l.* In 1821, it was about 20,000,000*l.*, and at that rate it has continued. Now, if any effectual relief was to be afforded to the country, it must be begun by reducing the establishments. The most effectual strength of the country was the navy; but he thought it would be injudicious to add to its numbers without diminishing the army, which was three millions more than the finance committee considered would be sufficient to maintain a permanent

establishment. He thought the House was not in a condition to go into a committee, until the chancellor of the Exchequer had stated the amount of the resources of the country, and what taxes he meant to reduce; for it was not possible for the country to sustain the same load of taxation in a metallic currency, as it had done in a paper one. He should have been very glad if the right hon. gentleman had brought forward the whole of his financial statement at once. He trusted the House would not suffer itself to be led away any longer by flattering and delusive statements, which ultimately turned out to be nothing but mere words. Ministers had told us, in his majesty's Speech, that professions of friendship and amity had been received from all foreign courts. If this was the fact, surely, especially when we took into consideration our insulated situation, there was no need for our keeping up, at such an enormous expense, such large military and naval establishments. Last year we had 29,000 seamen; this year it was proposed to add another thousand; whereas, the number appointed by the finance committee as a sufficient peace-establishment, was only 19,000. If we went on in this way, it was quite impossible that our finances could ever recover, or that we could ever be prepared to carry on an effective war. No naval establishment in the world amounted to one-half of our own. What was the navy of the United States, from which we were constantly told we had so much to fear? Why, the number of line-of-battle ships in the American navy was only seven, whereas the number of our ships of war was 509. Surely, then, we ought to pause before we added to our expenditure in this department. For his part, he would not consent to vote a single man or a single pound until the chancellor of the Exchequer had made a statement of the revenue and the expenditure. It should be recollected that, on a former occasion, ministers, after stating that it was quite impossible for them to make any reduction in their military establishment, had, of their own accord, when they found the revenue insufficient for the support of it, made a reduction in it, of from ten to twelve thousand men. Our army might, without any danger to the country, be decreased one-third, and then we might well afford to keep up a respectable naval establishment. He would move, by way of amendment, "That it is desirable, before the House should vote any part of the naval and military establishments for the year, that the extent of those establishments, and the estimates of them, should be laid before the House, particularly as the naval estimates for this year exceed in amount those of the last year."

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, the only mode the House had to determine why it was that the estimates of the present year exceeded those of the last, was by going into a committee of supply, in which his hon. friend (sir G. Clerk) would explain them, item by item. Although, for the last few years, he had felt it due to the public convenience to give as early an explanation as he could of the state of the finances of the country, yet he had never supposed the House would have been precluded from pursuing the usual course of going into a committee of supply for the purpose of inquiring whether the amount proposed ought to be voted. If the House were to abstain from investigating the estimates, item by item, until he had made his general statement of the finances of the country, it would be imposing on him a task which he should be unable to perform; for he must, in that case, take upon himself to explain the duties of his hon. friend near him, and of those other hon. friends who were engaged in the various public departments. It would be the most inconvenient course possible, and, in fact, was calculated to throw obstacles in the way of the views of the hon. member himself. If when the different items were explained to the committee by the head of the department to which they belonged, they were not explained in a satisfactory manner, the committee could reject them. The usual practice appeared to him to be at once the most convenient and the most salutary; and he therefore could not acquiesce in any proposal for departing from it.

Colonel *Davies* contended, that it was the duty of the House to make the government reduce its establishments, in order to secure a reduction of taxation. It was possible, that when these estimates were produced, he should give them his support, for they related to a branch of the public service towards which he, in common with every man, was disposed to act liberally. He was anxious to support the navy upon every occasion, as it was

the right arm of our strength, and the chief source of our glory. If the military establishment were not less for the present year than it was for the last, he should certainly move for a considerable reduction of it.

Mr. *Bright* called upon ministers to take the state of the country into immediate consideration. He took the present opportunity of protesting against their inactivity, in order that he might not, on some future occasion, be blamed for having participated in it. Indeed, if some explanation were not given before the House resolved itself into the committee, he did not know whether he should not be provoked to create an opportunity for delivering his own sentiments upon the present condition of the nation. The right hon. gentleman had stated, that it would be inconsistent with the ordinary practice of parliament, if, when he entered into his financial statements, he were to go into the estimates point by point. Did, then, the right hon. gentleman mean to put off his statement till all the estimates were voted? The sum voted as a supply might not be such as he proposed; and therefore it was necessary for the House to know how to apportion it to the different branches of the public service. The estimates ought to be examined in detail, with a view of making every possible reduction in them. He doubted much whether the revenue, under the new system of currency which was going to be introduced, could be raised to any thing like its old amount. Sure he was, that the proposed alteration in the circulating medium would cause great heart-burning in the collection of the ordinary taxes of the country.

Mr. *Hutchinson* supported the amendment. The going into a committee upon the estimates without having an account of the financial state of the country, appeared to him to be as absurd as it would be for a gentleman to order a carriage and horses, without knowing what fortune he had to support it. Ministers acted as if they wished to pledge the House to support a certain amount of expenditure, without allowing it to judge of its means of meeting it.

Mr. *Hume* said, that ministers, at the commencement of every year called on the heads of their different establishments to give them an account of the sums they wanted for the ensuing year, in order that they might lay them before the House within fourteen days after the meeting of parliament. Now, what he wanted ministers to do was this—before the House voted away any sums to one department, to let it know what the estimates for the whole year would amount to. It would then be able to decide what part of its funds it ought to apportion to the supply of the navy. If 17,000,000*l.* were the sum agreed upon for the service of the year, they could then determine whether it was right to vote 6,000,000*l.* to the navy, and 8 or 9,000,000*l.* to the army. At present, the House had not the necessary data to decide upon the proportions.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* observed, that whatever might be the distress of the country, he could see no reason why hon. gentlemen should set themselves in array against the forms of parliament, and should insist that business should be transacted in a different mode from that in which it had been transacted for ages. He believed that never, on any account, had there been any deviation from the course which government had proposed that night to take; that never, not merely since the Revolution, but before it, in the most turbulent times, had a vote been taken in objection to the Speaker's leaving the chair, when the purpose of it was to vote a supply in committee for the navy; and that never had such a demand been made upon any head of a department as that which had just been made on his hon. friend, to open his statement of the estimates before he went into the committee, where alone that statement could be productive of any practical result. The House went into a committee, in order that explanations might be asked and given of the different items in the estimates, without infringing upon the usual orders of the House; and the hon. member now asked, that for the first time these explanations should be given in the House itself; and because he had a speech within him, which he had declared his intention if provoked, to make, now called upon them to depart from their usual custom of voting each of the estimates separately in a committee. He would rather hear his speech now, and then go into the committee, than depart from the ancient and long-established practice of parliament. But, said another hon. gentleman, would it be right for a man to keep a house in town and another in the country, without

first examining into the amount of income he had to meet such an expenditure? The allusion, he conceived, to be ill chosen. For, in this case the man's books were forthcoming, to prove that he had supported a similar expenditure before. Besides, the house in the country might be considered as a sort of luxury; whereas what was now wanted was absolutely necessary to the defence of the country. If his servant were to tell him, that he wanted locks for his doors in order to secure his property, he would order them to be got, without making a previous inquiry into the general state of his affairs. So he would advise the House to act upon this occasion. The grant of these estimates was necessary to the defence of the country. He admitted, that the situation of the country was such as to require serious attention and deliberation; but, he would never admit that it was in such a condition, that its ordinary establishments could not be maintained, and that it was in such danger that the ordinary forms of parliament must be dispensed with. He should be sorry that the House should come to a division on this point; because the construction put upon such a division out of doors would be, that it was a sign of irritated opposition, which, as the hon. member's speech was not an angry speech, he did not believe had any existence in his mind. He therefore hoped that the hon. member would waive his opposition, and that he would consent to gain in the committee that information which, according to all prior usage, could be given in the committee alone.

Mr. *C. F. Palmer* thought that government should ascertain the effect of the alteration in the currency before it proceeded to levy taxes on the country. He asked, whether the salaries of certain functionaries filling high public situations, had not been raised in the course of the last year; and if so, whether they would not be still further raised, in consequence of the alterations which were now making in a depreciated currency?

Mr. *Hume* said, he was so far from being actuated by any angry feeling, that he would not press his amendment to a division. If his proposition went to introduce a new practice into the House, he was not aware of it. At any rate, whether new or not, he thought it highly advantageous to the public service.

The amendment was then negatived, and the House having resolved itself into the committee of supply,

Sir *George Clerk* said, that it now became his duty to explain to the committee why the navy estimates of this year were greater than those of the last. He expressed a hope that he should be able to satisfy the hon. member for Aberdeen, that the navy estimates of the present year were drawn up with every attention to economy, which the safety and the honour of the country admitted. The hon. member upon this occasion, as upon many others, had referred to the opinion given by the committee of finance in 1817, as to the requisite magnitude of our naval force, and had contrasted the navy estimates of that year with the navy estimates of the present. Now, upon that head, he would say, that owing to the great extension of our commerce with the nations of South America, the calls on the Admiralty for ships of war to afford it protection had very much increased; and that with the force now voted, the Admiralty had not been able to meet the demands which had been made upon it from several quarters to send an adequate force into all those seas. The committee would recollect, that there was no part of South America with which we did not trade at present. The unsettled situation of those states, arising partly from their struggle with their mother country, and partly from their jealousy of each other, rendered it absolutely necessary for this country to have an adequate naval force on the coasts of all of them, to guard our commerce from the insults to which it would otherwise be infallibly subjected. The hon. member for Aberdeen had stated, that the increase in our naval establishment had been occasioned by a corresponding increase in the navy of the United States. To that statement he must give an unqualified denial. The increase in our navy, since 1821, was occasioned by the increase of our commerce with South America. Its unsettled condition, which had been felt by the United States, by France, and by every naval power which had any commerce at all, had rendered an augmentation necessary in the naval force of each state. For the same reason, a necessity for increasing our force in the Mediterranean had risen out of the war now raging between the Greeks and the Turks. If we had not had a considerable naval force in that sea, we should have suffered

numerous insults from both the belligerents, of which ministers, had they taken place, would have heard pretty loudly in that House. The situation of the Spanish West-India islands, also, required the presence of a force to put down the practical squadrons which had recently cruised in their neighbourhood; and though, by the conjoint efforts of our own navy and that of the United States, they had recently been driven into holes and corners, still they were not exterminated; and if we diminished our force, they would soon recommence the depredations we had stopped. A large force was also stationed off the coast of Africa, to put down the traffic in slaves, and another for the same purpose, off the island of Cuba. If the committee, therefore, would consider the various calls which were made upon the Admiralty, it would see, that a force of 29,000 men was scarcely sufficient for the service. For the present year, a force of 30,000 men was deemed absolutely necessary. A requisition had been presented to the Admiralty from the East India company, praying that an additional naval force might be sent into the Indian seas, on account of the hostilities which now raged between the Burman empire and the East India company. A thousand men was the force required by them. As that force was sent into the Indian seas, not to protect British commerce, but to assist the East India company and to secure their territory, an arrangement was now in progress, by which the greater part of the expense of providing for it would be thrown upon the company. They were to furnish the sum of 60,000*l.* for that purpose; but as some additional powers would be wanted, to enable them to complete that arrangement, the mode in which they were to pay it would be explained on the introduction of the necessary bill. The amount of the estimates for the present year showed an excess above those of the last, of 180,000*l.* One cause of this increase was the additional force of 1,000 men. Another cause was, that the expense of victualling the navy had increased, in consequence of the advanced price of all kinds of provisions, and particularly of Irish pork and beef, of which the consumption was very considerable. An increase of 3*s.* a month in the victualling of each man had therefore become necessary; and thus notwithstanding the victualling of the navy was conducted with the utmost economy, an increase had been caused of nearly 100,000*l.* on these two heads of expenditure. The expense of the civil establishments of the navy had not increased. On the contrary, in some respects, it had considerably diminished. Indeed, he had no hesitation in saying, that had it not been for the additional force of 1000 men, and the increased price of provisions, the estimates for this year would have been much lower than for the last. Gentlemen would observe, that a change had been made in the drawing up the estimates. Under the first head of expenditure the vote for wages, for victuals, for wear and tear, and for ordnance, had generally been included. Neither of the two latter items of expenditure were found under that head in the estimates of the present year; and he would state the reason why. The sum voted for wear and tear was supposed to be expended on behalf of the ships which were actually afloat, and was calculated at so much a head. An objection had been made by the hon. member for Aberdeen to this mode of calculation. He had stated, that it was absurd to calculate the wear and tear by so much a head, instead of calculating it by the stores consumed. As soon as the objection was made, it was thought advisable to remedy the evil, and bring it entirely under the head of stores. There was this year a diminution of 320,000*l.* under the head of wear and tear. Under the head of ordnance there was a considerable increase; but, in the two articles of wear and tear, and of ordnance put together, there was a saving of 30,000*l.* With regard to the head of ordnance of the navy, as it was a matter over which the navy board had no control, it had been omitted in these estimates, and would be moved for when the ordnance estimates were brought forward. He did not think it necessary to say any thing on the ordinary estimates of the navy, as they were the same as last year. Ministers had reduced them to the lowest possible scale; and a proof of it was, that, with a force of 30,000 men our expenditure would not be greater than in 1821, when we had only a force of 23,000 men. There was one item which was inserted in these estimates for the first time for some years, and that was an item for the building of ships at Bombay. After the year 1822, this item had disappeared from the list; but the quality of the Indian timber had been found so ex-

cellent, the labour so cheap, and the workmanship so completely equal to that of our dockyards at home, that it had been deemed expedient to continue the building of vessels at Bombay. In the extra-estimates would be found an account of the sums to be expended upon works of the yards. He had stated on a former occasion, respecting the works at Sheerness, that if government were provided with funds to finish them in four instead of ten years, it would make about a saving of 14 per cent to the public. The cost of erecting the proposed works had been calculated by the late Mr. Rennie at 921,000*l.*, but an offer had since been made to government, to complete them in four years for 780,000*l.* The plan containing that offer appeared so beneficial to the public, that government had no hesitation in acceding to it; so that, instead of calling on the committee for the vote originally mentioned for this head of expense, he should call upon it this year for a vote for 150,000*l.* There was an item of 50,000*l.* for completing the works of the Break-water, on which it was found necessary to employ a greater number of men than had yet been employed there. Under these two heads there was an increase of 181,000*l.* in the estimates. This, added to the increase of nearly 100,000*l.* for which he had before accounted, made a total increase of 281,000*l.*; from this was to be deducted a sum of 94,000*l.* voted on account of the ordnance stores last year, and not yet expended; so that the real increase of expense to the country, after making allowance for the ordnance, &c. would leave the estimates of the year greater than those of the last by 180,000*l.* The whole of this increase arose from the necessity of employing 1,000 additional men, from the increase in the price of provisions, and from the necessity of proceeding with their engagements at Sheerness more rapidly than was originally expected. That rapidity was rendered the more necessary by a great part of the works being at present under water, and therefore in a state very liable to be injured by violent winds or high tides. The hon. member concluded by moving, "That 30,000 men be employed for the sea service, from the 1st of January 1826, including 9,000 royal marines."

Mr. *Hume* observed, that it was difficult for him to say whether 29,000 or 30,000 men were the exact number required for the sea-service. He should not, therefore, object so much to the number of men employed, as to the amount of expenditure contained in these estimates. He was convinced that there must be something radically wrong in it, from finding that, at former periods of our history, we had kept up a much larger navy at one-third less expense. It was easy to say, that the navy was an important branch of the public service, and therefore ought not to be neglected. He admitted that it was important; but still it was only important in degree. When he objected to the increase of our naval force three years ago, the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs said, that it was impossible to protect our commerce with the states of South America without a large disposable force, on account of the unsettled nature of their governments, and their war with the parent state. That consideration induced the House to acquiesce in that increase. He was now surprised at hearing the same cause alleged for another increase, when these states were at peace with one another, their struggle with the parent state at an end, and three distinct treaties of peace had been made between us and them. But it was said, that the presence of a large naval force was required in the Mediterranean. He did not think so: he had never yet heard of any English vessel having been either plundered or stopped by either Greeks or Turks, except when they were dealing in articles contraband of war. But then, the revenue at home required protection. And why did it? Because they kept up a system of high duties, and so spent in maintaining the preventive service a sum larger than that which would have been lost to the revenue by establishing a system of low duties. He thought that, by a reduction of duties, an end might not only be put to the smuggling which now existed on our coast, but also a saving be effected to the nation of 500,000*l.* The keeping up a naval squadron on the coast of Africa, which was the grave of our brave seamen, for the purpose of suppressing the slave trade, appeared to him, though the object was certainly laudable, to be a measure that ought to be dispensed with: of every negro whom they intercepted, for they could not save them from slavery, the purchase was the life of an English sailor. On the whole, he thought that 30,000 men were not wanted for the service of the navy. The flag of Great Britain would be as much respected at the mast-head of

a frigate, as on that of a ship of the line. If the estimates were increased in one item, on account of the increased price of provisions, there were other items on which they might be diminished. If they were not, they would go on increasing as they had done year after year, till they would soon become ten millions instead of six. The want of economy was an addition to the difficulties of the country. Let but a gun be fired in hostility against us, and government would soon discover the situation to which they had reduced the country by the neglect of its finances.—He proceeded to point out the great increase which had taken place in the half-pay and pension list since 1817, and to infer from that increase, that there was great abuse in the management of it. Any officer who had not parliamentary interest, found great difficulty in getting promotion; and any officer who had, was promoted up to a certain grade, and then placed on the half-pay list to make room for others. It appeared by the estimates, that there were already 250 ships more than the finances of the country were enabled to man; and he therefore thought that it was a mere waste of money to promote so many officers as had lately been raised. The consequence of that increase was also objectionable in another point of view: by adding to the amount of the half-pay, it augmented the dead weight, as it was very properly called. By the estimates which had been formed of that payment, it ought to have been reduced from 1,100,000*l*. to 550,000*l*.; but, so far from this being the case, the sum paid to pensioners now was 300,000*l*. more than it had been at the end of the war. Surely no gentlemen would gravely say that such a state of things as this ought to be tolerated. In the year 1822, in consequence of the very strong representations which had been made in that House, a reduction had taken place in the salaries of the civil officers of the establishments, and they amounted then to 714,000*l*. In the present year, however, an increase appeared to have taken place, and the same salaries were 789,000*l*. The charge for the half-pay of 896,000*l*. was, as he had often observed before, when alluding to that item, quite enormous, and might, he really believed, be very much reduced under a better system, if the Admiralty were compelled to make selections from that list for the public service. In the superannuation allowance, he would not say any thing else, than that a great portion of the sum was money actually wasted. He did not mean to assert, that there were not many highly deserving individuals who had honestly earned that bounty; but, if any man would look back to the estimate of 1817, which was only 85,000*l*., and consider that they were now called upon to vote 164,000*l*. for the same allowance, they must agree that it was a very lavish expenditure. As long, however, as they continued to allow the Admiralty to make promotions in the manner they did at present, they could not expect any reduction, but rather that they should every year be called upon to vote even larger sums for the superannuation list. In the marines, where there had been little or no new promotions since the termination of the war, large reductions had been, of course, effected under the head of "Superannuation," and yet he believed the marines were as effective as any corps in the service. If the Admiralty were restricted as to the promotions in the navy, they would soon find a similar result in the Superannuation list of that branch of the service. In the same manner, under the head of Pursers, they would find that the absence of promotion had effected a similar reduction, and he had no hesitation in again asserting, that if the same rule was applied to the other part of the navy establishments, instead of being called upon to vote 1,388,000*l*., they might be able to discharge all demands with 560,000*l*. The next estimate was a sum of 1,980,000*l*. for building and repairs of shipping, and the supply of stores for the navy. Of that sum, 1,395,000*l*. had been expended upon building and repairing alone. He had, on a former occasion, shown, very satisfactorily, from returns on the table of the House, that a sum of seventeen millions had been expended upon that branch of the service alone, since the conclusion of the war; and that the sum total for building, repairing, and providing of stores for the navy, amounted to twenty-three millions—a sum sufficient for the full support of two navies, such as the country required. Instead of keeping up a navy of 500 ships, of all sizes, which required a million sterling to supply its losses, and three or four hundred thousand pounds for wear and tear; instead of supporting an establishment of that kind, which, whatever they might daily hear of its sound and

efficient state, he thought could only, in the present state of the country, be kept to rot; it would be well to consider, whether it was right to support them at all, or whether they would eventually be found as beneficial in case of war. If it cost now above six millions to keep only 130 of these ships in commission, what sum, he would ask, would it require to fit out the five hundred, if they were once more called into action? Was the country in a state to admit of such an outlay? They never could repay in value the sums which were wasted upon them; and he would humbly submit, that the best policy in their present state, would be, to keep the vessels they now possessed in an efficient state, and give up that rash and improvident system of building new ones, which were only destined, like their predecessors, to rot in the dock-yards. He should be glad to see the attention of the Admiralty turned to the recent discoveries which had been made respecting steam-vessels used as ships of war; and to consider, that in the event of this country being engaged in war, a great change must of necessity take place, by which many of our ships would be rendered wholly useless. Upon this subject he could assure the House, that the expenses which were constantly incurred were, in the opinion of persons well qualified to judge, a downright waste. The expenses of improving and finishing the dock-yards at Sheerness would amount to little less than 2,000,000*l.* The estimate for this year alone amounted to 150,000*l.* It had been admitted, that if the use of steam-boats in taking vessels up and down the river had been known, these works would not have been begun. But surely, now that the advantages of steam-boats were duly appreciated, the extensive dock-yards at Chatham might be appropriated for all the necessary purposes; and as there was no longer any difficulty in taking ships thither, it could not be prudent to throw away this 150,000*l.* at Sheerness. He was not sure that the accounts contained any other items which required a particular notice. The aggregate amount appeared to be 6,135,000*l.*, which he thought a great deal too large at this time. In 1792, the character of the British navy had been no less high, nor was it less respected abroad than at the present moment, and then one-fourth of its present number of ships had been found enough for all useful purposes. He took it to be a most unsatisfactory reason to say, that the protection of the revenue required this expense: if that were true, it would be better, in every other as well as in a pecuniary point of view, to alter the laws, so as to prevent the necessity of any such extraordinary protection. He saw there was a charge for hired packets, and this charge was connected with the Post-office department. He thought these two establishments ought to be kept entirely separate, and that the House ought to see distinctly what was paid for the Navy, and what for the Post-office.—He was sorry to have taken up so much of the time of the committee, but he thought it necessary to express his disapprobation of the estimates, because he was convinced they were such as the state of Europe did not require. He disapproved also of the manner in which promotions had been made in the course of the last year, and of the number of those promotions. By increasing the number of pensions it added to the dead weight, and would continue to do so, while the present establishment should be kept up. The officers themselves were dissatisfied at the unfairness and hardships which they experienced in having young men, who had no other claim to promotion than their family influence, raised above them, and being thus deprived of the rank and advantages to which their long services entitled them. He trusted that ministers would do something to check the injurious system which prevailed, and that they would be convinced of the inutility of promoting so many officers. He did not know how many promotions had taken place this year, but he believed the numbers were between 500 and 600. Many persons, he knew, were of opinion, that promotions should go on; he thought that if they did, they should at least go on very slowly. All the promotions should be made on account of long services alone; and in time of peace, no new ones should take place.

Sir *G. Clerk* said, he had no wish to complain either of the statements which had just been made by the hon. member, or of the manner in which he had brought them forward; for he had done no more than what he conceived to be his duty, in directing the attention of the committee to such matters. The hon. gentleman had objected to the aggregate amount of the half-pay and pension charge, as being this year excessive, instead of exhibiting

a decrease. Now, taking the whole of the half-pay, he would admit that this charge had increased; but if the hon. gentleman alluded to the half-pay of officers, he would find that, in truth, a material reduction in the amount had taken place. The increase was in the civil class of the half-pay; and it was great undoubtedly, owing to two causes. The first of these was the material reduction of official establishments which took place in 1822, when a vast number of clerks in particular departments of the public service, connected with the navy were discharged. None but the ablest and the most efficient clerks, in many instances, were retained; but they who were so discharged, had the strongest claims on account of their long services, upon the consideration of government. Another cause, which had swelled this aggregate to its present amount, had been the great diminution of the funds for the Widows' pension. During the war, large contributions were levied on the pay of officers and crews of ships, and to such an amount, that no calls were made on the public bounty. But now, from obvious causes, these funds had become much exhausted; and the consequence was, that a charge of 90,000*l.* appeared in these estimates for that item alone, which had not appeared in the former estimates to which the hon. gentleman referred. For the same reasons, Greenwich Hospital, which, in war-time, had contributed to these objects very large sums of money, accruing from unclaimed pay, wages and prize-shares, had now become dried up. And though parliament had directed, that the funds in question should contribute to the payment of these services, as long as they lasted, still, when they became so far extinct as to furnish sufficient only for the payment of in-door pensioners, &c., it became necessary to apply to this House for the means of replacing them. The item of "Greenwich Hospital" was 260,000*l.*; and if the hon. gentleman would add this sum, and the deficiencies he had spoken of, together, he would see they amounted to about 400,000*l.*; which amount he would, of course, take into account, as forming a large portion of the excess of charge that he complained of. In the half-pay of officers there was a decided decrease of charge. As to what the hon. gentleman had said, respecting promotions, the marines were, in this respect, quite a different service from the navy. In the latter, commissions were granted to lieutenants, who must have already passed through a long period of service: in the marines, they were given to individuals without regard to the same conditions of previous service. It was impossible to stop promotion in the navy for several reasons. Many of those promotions took place on foreign stations, and were but a moderate reward for the services of persons who were induced principally by the chance of promotion to go to the coast of Africa and other unhealthy climates. If the chance of promotion did not exist, it would be difficult to find persons to go on such hazardous service. The hon. member had also said, that there was a great increase in the item for salaries for clerks in the civil departments of the navy. The hon. member must have known that those clerks were entitled to a small progressive increase of salary, and if he had taken the trouble to look into the subject, he would have discovered that this circumstance, and nothing else, was the cause of the increase of the item alluded to. The hon. gentleman, in alluding to the million which he supposed was paid for building and repairs, had fallen into an error similar to that which the hon. Secretary for the Admiralty had set him right about some time ago. He was, however, happy to say, notwithstanding the hon. gentleman's misinformation on this subject, that at no period of the history of this country had the ships in ordinary been in a better state than they were at present, and that being repaired with seasoned timber, they had shown no symptoms of the ravages of the dry-rot. A great expense was necessarily incurred for the purpose of keeping the ships in repair; but it was an expense which was wholly unavoidable. The hon. member had objected to the works going on at Sheerness, now that steam-boats would answer all the purposes for which those works had been undertaken. He would give the hon. member the benefit of his argument, which only amounted to this, that by transferring the vessels from Sheerness to Chatham, the establishments at Chatham must be increased. By having those docks at Sheerness, an opportunity offered of putting every ship into dock, and of inspecting them in every part. The hon. member had complained of the expenditure of two millions upon those docks; but, when the hon. member made that com-

plaint, he ought to have remembered, that this work was undertaken for the purpose of saving a sum of ten millions, the estimated expense of works proposed to be erected at Northfleet. He should only further observe, that if unfortunately this country should be again involved in hostilities, it would be found that advantage had been taken of every invention necessary to maintain the naval superiority of Great Britain.

After a short conversation, the several resolutions were agreed to.

PROMISSORY NOTES BILL]. The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* rose to move the order of the day for the second reading of this bill. Before he did so, he wished to state to the House, that it was his intention, in the committee, to submit a proposition, not to the extent suggested by the hon. member for Newton (Mr. Hudson Gurney), which he thought went too far, but a modification of it. The proposition of the hon. member was, if he understood him right, that the circulation of small notes should be prohibited to the country banks, and yet the issue should be permanently allowed to the Bank of England. Now, this proposition would be very unjust to the country banks, and inconsistent with the whole principle of the measure. But, it had been represented to him, that a limitation of that proposition, so far from impeding the measure, would promote its success. It was his intention, therefore, to propose, that instead of prohibiting the Bank of England from issuing small notes dated subsequently to the 5th of February last, it should be left to them to issue such notes dated previous to the 10th of October next. The object of this proposition was, to give the country bankers facilities for preparing themselves for the effects of the bill, and the gradual withdrawal of their notes. It had been stated, that the greatest possible inconvenience would arise, if all the small notes were completely withdrawn at one moment. When the bill came into the committee, he should propose that there should be such a limitation as he had stated. He should, however, propose, that the notes of the Bank of England should be finally withdrawn, at the same time as those of the country banks.

Mr. *Ellice* asked, what great relief was to be afforded by this alteration, and whether it was not, in fact, an abandonment of the main principle of the bill? And was this to be the result after all their anxiety to get the small notes out of circulation, and after all the executions at Newgate? There was no boon in the proposed change; it was a paltry alteration. He had been desirous not to discuss this question, so as to excite any popular feeling, especially when the country was in such difficulties; but, after the communication that had just been made, he could not avoid speaking of it as a paltry proceeding. A superior necessity had occasioned the recent issue of Bank of England small notes: to that necessity he bowed; but, after what had been promised, he did not expect this alteration, and thought the directors deserved to be arraigned for their conduct. He called upon the House to consider what they were about. Would they, or would they not, put down the evil which, by the gigantic rapidity of its advances, had brought the country to the brink of destruction? What was the paltry consideration that was to induce the House to abandon the original principle of the bill? For his part, he would not lend his humble countenance to such deviation, but would, even if he stood alone, divide the House upon the subject. It became the House to show the country that, however pressing might be the difficulties, they were resolved to surmount them by steadiness and discretion, rather than suffer themselves to be led into an abandonment of those principles which they proposed as the groundwork of a remedy to the existing evils.

Mr. *Bright* said, he felt strongly for the distresses under which the country continued to labour; and would ask, were not he and his friends fully justified in voting against the bill? Were not he and his hon. friends justified in asking, whether the present was a proper time for the introduction of such a measure? Were they not justified in having voted against it, under the existing circumstances of the country? Were they not justified in the belief which they had expressed, that ministers could not carry it? Were they not justified in their assertion, *that it was* impossible that the country could bear the operation of the bill? Were they not justified in stating that, taxed and impoverished as they were, the people ought not to be additionally distressed by the withdrawal of the small-note currency? He had already declared his intention of

accusing ministers of supineness, during the late distress, and had asserted that the measures proposed were not adequate to meet the existing difficulties. On what principle, he would ask, had the Bank of England been instructed by government to buy up Exchequer-bills within these three days? For the benefit of the public he would be told; but that was not the effect which that extraordinary proceeding was calculated to produce. Nothing but a large issue of Exchequer-bills could relieve the distress which prevailed at present; and, moreover, that distress was not confined to one class of persons. The stock-broker might, it was true, be relieved by that operation; but the regular, fair, honourable merchant, who was a much more important member of the community, would derive no benefit from it. There were other classes, too—the small trader, and those immediately connected with him—whose sufferings should be taken into consideration; and it was the duty of the House to provide funds to enable them to carry on their business. He would again complain, that ministers were inactive and supine, and, if they intended to continue to administer the affairs of the country, they must change their mode of proceeding, and become more active. He had hoped they would have profited by the recollection of what had been done by their predecessors in 1793, and the report of which lay upon the table of the House; by a reference to which, the strong analogy between the circumstances of that time and the present would be found. What did Mr. Pitt do, at that period, at the recommendation of the merchants? He issued a small number of Exchequer-bills, and the evils were cured; cured too, not merely without loss, but with absolute profit to the Treasury. The distress at both periods being the same in principle, the same principle of relief should be afforded. Why should we now adopt new expedients? Why not profit by the experience and the wisdom of our ancestors? He was no speculatist, no theorist. He disliked the fashionable philosophy of the day, and called on the House to adopt the wise measure of Mr. Pitt. He should not have risen, but was driven to it by the jibes of the right hon. gentleman opposite. He should reserve the rest of his argument for another day.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, he was not at a loss to account for the extreme degree of heat displayed by the hon. member for Bristol; for, if the arguments which he had reserved for another day, were not of a better and more wholesome nature than those of which he had delivered himself, he was not surprised at their sitting so heavily and unpleasantly upon him; for, he would say, a speech more inconsistent, more directly opposed to sound reason, than that of the hon. member, had never been made in that House. The hon. member blamed ministers for their supineness at the period of the late distress, and then, when he found that they were about to bring forward a remedy, he proposed the appointment of a committee to inquire into the state of the country; and no sooner had he said so, but he told the House what he himself would do, without any committee at all. He next found fault with the prohibition of small-note currency, and in the same breath condemned the issue of small notes by the Bank. He blamed government for having directed the Bank to buy up the Exchequer-bills, and increased thereby the distress; and the next moment he said to them, "Issue a large number of Exchequer-bills, and you will effectually remove the existing evils." Where were purchasers to be found for those millions of bills which the hon. gentleman would thus throw into the market? No where, but in the hon. gentleman's own imagination. So that he condemned government for having, within a few days, bought up Exchequer-bills, they being then at a discount, and at the same time called for an extended issue of them. He should leave the learned member for Bristol to reconcile these inconsistencies. The hon. member for Coventry also had lost his usual placidity. He talked of impeaching the Bank directors for having lately re-issued one and two pound notes. Now, he had yet to learn, why a body of men, authorized by the legislature to do an act, should be impeached for doing that which the law entitled them; and he thought it would require all the legal acumen even of the learned member for Bristol to draw up the articles of impeachment.

Mr. *Ellice*.—I never used the word impeach. I said arraign.

Mr. *Huskisson*—Well, arraign let it be; but let the House inquire what had been the conduct of those individuals. The moment the Bank directors found themselves in possession of a sufficient quantity of gold coin to supply the place of their

small paper, they withdrew their one-pound notes from circulation. Did that look like a desire to force them into circulation? On the contrary, so well were they satisfied with the results of the step they had taken—so strong was their recollection of past difficulties, and of the thousand unpleasant circumstances attendant upon the existence of a small-note currency—that, so far from wishing to send their one and two pound notes again into circulation, they were most anxious, as their conduct had evinced, to withdraw them entirely. The hon. gentleman came down on one night and arraigned the government, and the next he inveighed against the Bank; but, he would ask the hon. gentleman, whether he really thought he had any grounds for those attacks? for it must be apparent, that, as far as the Bank was concerned, they had, in order to supply the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the country notes, issued a certain number of one and two pound notes, and they had no possible objection to withdraw them. It was reported to government, that the country banks were suddenly withdrawing their small notes, and it was to meet the want that would thus be created, that the proposed alteration was intended. He assured the hon. member for Coventry, that he could not be more anxious than he himself was, to make the pressure that would ensue from the withdrawal of the small notes operate as evenly as possible. If danger could be apprehended from that being done too suddenly, the House would give great facility to its own object, by averting that danger. There was this great difference between the two hon. gentlemen: one said, that the whole issues ought to be withdrawn, no matter what might be the consequence; the other said, "you never can withdraw them at all." He was quite sure, notwithstanding all that had been said to the contrary, that the metallic currency would, in a very short period, entirely supersede the dreadful issue of small notes.

Sir *J. Wrottesley* said, he was apprehensive that the incidental wants of the country would oblige ministers to abandon their original principle, and that when they should have abandoned their principle, his hon. friends, of the philosophic club behind him, would come down upon them. Do what they would, ministers could not please. The system of going on upon principle and theory was to him so novel and extraordinary, that he found a difficulty in conforming to it. In after-years, when the history of this country should be narrated, it would be said, "This little island was originally called Lilliput, and it was then governed by dwarfs; it next assumed the name of Brobdignag, under the sway of giants. Finally, its name was Laputa, and its rulers were philosophers. From that period its glory began to vanish, its strength to decay, its might to decline, and it has degenerated into a state commensurate with the insignificance of its geometrical extent." The right hon. gentlemen on the other side had, as it appeared to him, deviated from their principle. They had set out on the theory of introducing a metallic currency and withdrawing the paper money from circulation. And what was the purport of their present proposal? Why, merely to substitute for the paper of the country banks, the notes of the Bank of England—notes which were more liable to be forged than any other. He (Sir J. W.) had never wished to see one-pound notes issued, but that they afforded facilities to manufacturers and workmen. He knew it to be a fact, that within fourteen miles of Birmingham, forged Bank of England notes had been offered eight and forty hours after the time those notes were re-issued. The bulk of the provincial notes came back to the country banks, upon an average, in six weeks. Now, if the banker must bring gold from London, he would not re-issue his notes, and the country would have no circulation at all. With respect to the metallic currency, he had been informed that ten out of every fifteen sovereigns brought to the Bank were not worth 18*s*. from their having been sweated down. In this dearth of genuine circulation, ministers were taking away country bank notes, which were seldom forged, and suffering the re-issue of Bank of England notes, which were easily forged.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, that the degree in which the chancellor of the Exchequer had consented to enlarge the time for allowing the Bank of England to issue small notes, was, in his view, so far from being a dereliction of the plans which the right hon. gentleman had brought forward, that he was convinced, that it was the only possible manner in which they could be carried into effect. He had, on a former occasion, entered into the great distinction that existed between the cir-

culation of the Bank of England and that which was founded on mere private responsibility, extendable, or liable to diminution, on every fluctuation of the credit of the issuers. The great and pressing danger of the country, at the present moment, was that of being left without any circulating medium at all. The gold issued was hoarded, the notes issued were run in on the bankers. The larger bankers would, of course, be anxious to withdraw a circulation rendered both dangerous and discreditable; and those who might struggle to continue their issues would find their notes return on them so fast, as to render any general circulation impracticable. With regard to the private bankers, he must again repeat, that the three years given for the gradual wearing out of the notes already stamped was, as regarded, the exigencies of the present moment, a mere fallacy. It was a discountenanced, and therefore a discredited medium. Indeed he had that very day been told of a banker, of great respectability in a manufacturing district in Yorkshire, who had only thirteen thousand pounds in circulation in one-pound notes. He issued them, and re-issued them; and, in the course of less than a week, had paid the whole amount three times over; on which he took them all up, and threw them into the fire. Under these circumstances, it was of the extremest importance, that the Bank of England should have the power to replace the paper withdrawn. This would prepare the way for allowing a metallic circulation to be introduced into the country; which all experience had sufficiently shown could never be co-existent with the private notes. Gold hitherto had been freely circulated only in the metropolis; and by allowing the Bank to continue their issues of small notes for a certain period after the private notes had ceased to be stamped, they would also be enabled gradually to get out the coin that might be wanted, but which, as a simultaneous operation, no amount of gold which could be supposed to be in their coffers, would be adequate to supply. He still thought it would have been safer to have left that period indefinite; but he believed the chancellor of the Exchequer's proposition would meet the existing exigences; though he should have much preferred inserting the month of January to that of October.

Mr. *Cripps* said, he could not see the weight of the hon. gentleman's argument, that the country bankers notes would be driven out of circulation by the discredit which would attach to them from the prospect of the change about to be adopted. He was disposed to believe, that, in a few instances, bankers had withdrawn their notes with an injudicious precipitancy, but it was to be presumed that a little reflection would convince them that the experiment was one which could not with wisdom or advantage be repeated. The hon. gentleman had, indeed, stated an extraordinary fact, with regard to 13,000*l.* having been paid and returned three times in the course of a few days. Such instances were possible, but he was convinced they must be very rare. He wished much that not a word had been said on the subject of one-pound notes; but, as the question had been stirred, and as ministers had proceeded to the length they had done, delay would be dangerous: hesitation could be productive only of mischief. Since ministers had determined that these notes should, with the concurrence of the House, be ultimately withdrawn, he was of opinion that the course they had pursued was the wisest that could have been adopted. An hon. member had said, that the measure would have the effect of reducing the price of agricultural produce, and, undoubtedly, so it would for a time. Agricultural produce could not remain stationary if the price of every other commodity fell; but he did not expect that that fall would be of long duration. The quantity of the country bank-notes, of the value of one and two pounds, was much smaller than was supposed. With regard to the Bank of England notes, which were intended to be issued, the amount that would get into circulation would be trifling, on account of the liability to forgery; for such was the dread of them on this account, that if there was a country bank in the neighbourhood, of known stability, there was not a labourer who would not prefer taking its notes to those of the former. A great deal had been said about speculations, and, no doubt, there had been a great deal of that, both to the ruin of the country and of the banks. But he entertained strong hopes that much ultimate good would result from it, and that the lesson which had been taught would not be easily forgot. There were occurrences, however, in the natural course of business, in which as great loss had been sustained as in those speculations. A friend of his, who

was no speculator, and who had a few thousands by him, of which he did not know very well how to dispose, determined on investing the one-half in Exchequer bills, and the other in consols. He had since had occasion for his money, and had lost more in that way, than he could have done in the worst species of circulation. He thought, therefore, that too much stress was laid on speculation, when it was possible to suffer to an equal, if not greater degree by government securities. With respect to the two millions of Exchequer-bills, it was wrong to think that the issue of them could do no good. It undoubtedly did do good to some; those, for instance, who wanted to sell out, though in a general point of view it was a mere idea—a delusion. What, then, would grant relief? One gentleman said this, and another said that; but what danger could there be from an issue of Exchequer-bills, on lodging merchandize as security for the amount? Hon. gentlemen said, that it would furnish a bad precedent. God forbid that it should be rejected merely on that account! Let it be recollected that, at a former time the very anticipation of a relief of this nature alleviated the distress. The opinions and conduct of some politicians brought to his mind the idea of a man who had got wet in his feet, and caught a cold, which fell upon his lungs. Should the benefit of medical treatment be withheld from such a person, because he had brought his misfortune upon himself? Surely not. He was willing to go the full length with those who charged speculators with having, by their own imprudence, drawn embarrassments upon themselves; but were they, on that account, to be debarred the means of rising again from their difficulties?

Mr. *Calcraft* congratulated the right hon. gentlemen opposite on the new light which had broken in upon them. They now, it appeared, felt the force of the arguments which he and others had been in vain urging since the commencement of the session, in which they endeavoured to show the extreme impolicy of ministers, in crying down one species of currency, before they had another to substitute for it. And now, seeing that their measures could not be otherwise carried into effect, they had been driven to the expedient of supplying the place of the country notes with the small notes of the Bank of England. The mischievous nature of the course they were pursuing had settled the opinion of the country with respect to their utter ignorance and incapacity. From the correspondence which he himself carried on, and from the information of others who had still more extensive means of ascertaining the real state of public opinion, he was warranted in saying, that the sense of the country, as to their gross ignorance about these matters, was universal. If they, instead of crying down the existing circulation, had supported such of the country banks as had stood the test of the late trying times—and few of them, in comparison with the whole number, had failed, and many of those who had stopped payments had again commenced business, having paid 20*s*. in the pound—had supported them, they would soon have had an ample and secure circulation. They talked about getting gold as a substitute for the country small notes; but gold they could not get; and now, after having discredited the notes of the country banks, they were forced to bring into their place these notes of the Bank of England, which were well known to be the cause of so much crime. What was now to be the conduct of those who had supported the ministers on the ground of the metallic currency? It was to be hoped, that they would state the reason why they continued their support, or show, by their votes, that they abandoned ministers. If ministers could procure notes as difficult to be forged as those of the country banks, he should think that the supply of their paper would be a considerable improvement of the system; but, as his objection went to the whole bill, he would take the sense of the House upon it in every stage. It was lamentable to see the injurious effects that had resulted from the ignorance and incapacity of ministers. He had seen a letter from York, from a gentleman, who stated, that the people in that quarter had been reduced to the condition of the barbarous ages; and that, from the want of a circulating medium, they were forced to give their workmen provisions, clothes, and other articles, in barter for their work; whereas, if ministers had supported the country-bank circulation of small notes, no difficulty would have existed. He was perfectly astonished at their ignorance, and advised them to retrace their steps, and extend the term of stamping the country bank notes, instead of forcing into

circulation those of the Bank of England, which were so objectionable, on account of the facility of forging them. He hoped the right hon. gentleman would be prepared to propose some such improvement on Monday.

Mr. *Tierney* begged leave to assure the House, that though he had hitherto carefully abstained from taking a part in these discussions, it was not because he was insensible of their value, or indifferent to their results. On the contrary, he had uniformly felt the greatest anxiety to hear all that had been said on the occasion. He could assure the House, that during the course of a long parliamentary experience, he had never listened with more patience to the agitation of any great question than he had done to this; and never did he recollect one in which party feeling had so entirely given way to the calm and deliberate consideration of the imperative interests of the country. He gave at the outset his cordial assent to the principle upon which the contemplated measures of ministers were founded; namely, a speedy return to a metallic circulation. He knew it to be a sound principle: he thought the government were serious, and knew what they were about respecting it: indeed, he admired them for the apparent stoutness with which they had brought forward the measure. But, what was the case now? The ministers had no sooner announced their plan, accompanied by a firm declaration of its inviolability, than they came forward with a new proposition, which, mitigate as they would, was a material abandonment of the principle with which they had set out. Throughout the whole of these proceedings, indeed, he had witnessed the strangest indecision, and wandering from one point to another in their course—at one time exhibiting more firmness than the occasion required, and at another time the most compromising distrust. The chancellor of the Exchequer and the first lord of the Treasury had set out with what he would not call their well-considered letter to the Bank, partly because he did not think it had been well considered at all, and partly because (though he knew that meaning was not intended) it indulged in expressions which were liable, as they had been, to be misconstrued into indiscriminate reflections upon the country bankers. This letter was followed by the exposé of the two branches of the system which the government had determined to act upon; first, the increase of the number of banking partners, and the wider basis, to which all good men looked forward, on which the gold currency of the kingdom was to be re-established. Who could have believed that this wholesome plan was destined hardly to be developed, when it was to be materially altered? From the 5th of February no new stamping of country small notes was to be allowed, and their gradual abolition was decreed within three years. He thought, at the time, that this was intended rather to be too slowly, than too abruptly accomplished: he thought then, as he did now, that the government could have so arranged their resources, as to make the necessary supply of gold for the withdrawn notes as rapidly and conveniently as the nature of business could have required it. But now the Bank of England was, by a new manœuvre in the movement of the machine, to have nine months longer for issuing small notes, than was to be allowed to any other banking establishment; and an hon. gentleman near him (Mr. Hudson Gurney) had regretted, that twelve months instead of nine were not afforded for this operation. Now, he was at a loss to understand why the nine months would not answer as well as twelve, for every purpose of manufacturing their notes; for he thought that within a much shorter time, the Bank had it sufficiently in their power, or they never would, to provide a supply fit for any purpose. The whole position of the chancellor of the Exchequer in his former statement, was, that these small bank-notes, and a metallic circulation, could not go on together. That was a very clear and irrefragable position. It was not, at all events, one of the new-fangled ones of which they had heard so much; for it was at least a hundred years old, and to be found in many good books which had long ago promulgated the doctrine, that a good and a bad circulation could not co-exist, for that inevitably the bad would soon send the good about its business. Yes, and it would do more—it would prevent the good from coming in to recruit, even for a moment, where it was wanting. It was quite impossible to expect a gold currency, as long as this small-note process was continued. In the absence of the one-pound note, it might be relied upon that a metallic currency would flow in to supply the gap; but, if these small notes of the Bank of England were to be let in,

what became of the right hon. gentleman's system? For gold never could circulate along with these notes. He did not then mean to enter upon a particular discussion of the general principle, but it appeared that the right hon. gentleman expected, that when gold came into circulation at the end of these three years, the Bank of England notes would give way. He had not seen the famous paper alluded to, as having been presented by Mr. Burke to Mr. Pitt; but he perfectly remembered Mr. Burke's declaration, that as long as the country kept a one-pound note in circulation, they could not expect to see a guinea. Now, he begged not to be understood as one of those who was panic-struck at the prospect of affairs. On the contrary, he had a great reliance on the strength and energy of her resources. He saw no cause of permanent alarm as arising from recent events; neither was he impressed with a belief that this want of confidence would endure. The resources of the people were, he was persuaded firm; their spirit and energy were still alive: distrust was certainly afloat, and what made it but this want of confidence, which the government seemed by their measures rather to prolong than to mitigate? What was the origin of the alarm and the difficulties which had seized upon men's minds? In looking to that point, it was impossible for him to exculpate the government, or to refrain from censuring their policy. The besetting vice of this country—that by which ministers were constantly doing their best to diffuse, by every exertion and energy they could command—was the rage to keep up prices. Every country gentleman trembled at a reduction of his rents—every merchant exclaimed against lowering the price of his goods—and all classes vied with each other in keeping up prices as high as they had been years back. In fact, they were all mad enough to wish to keep up war prices in a time of peace. He held the attempt to be utterly impracticable. It could not go on, he repeated; it was madness to think of it; and he would lay down this as an irresistible proposition—that a metallic currency and present prices could not exist at one and the same time. It was quite impracticable, and the idea of a radical error; and upon that point he would frankly and fairly speak out. He would listen to no man's nostrum that had for its object the continuance of the war prices, and at the same time, a metallic currency. He knew that this was unpalatable doctrine, but it was the truth; and this was not a time to abstain from stating the truth on so important a subject, though the truth might be disagreeable. Then, rushing from one extreme to another, what did ministers do? In 1822, they made an issue of Exchequer-bills, and the Bank, in concurrence with them, entered into measures which had the effect of giving a great stimulus to public-money-matters, and of lowering the rate of interest. What the Bank had done was, he had always heard, done on the suggestion of the government. The measures that were adopted on the occasion to which he alluded, were of a very unusual kind. The Bank thought it right to step out of its proper line of business, and to lend money on stock, and afterwards to make advances upon mortgages at four per cent. These proceedings had necessarily the effect of keeping up the prices both of stock and mortgages; while, contrary to all usage, it swept down the rate of interest throughout the country. It was not alone the advance of this 1,200,000*l.* on mortgage at four per cent that created this effect; its principle operated immediately, from one end of the country to the other, and commanded the payment of mortgages held elsewhere and under different engagements. No man would pay more than four per cent; and he was safe in saying so, for he could go to the Bank, and get the money there, to extricate himself from the previous dearer incumbrance. The money thus called in, was turned into channels of speculation of all kinds; but who had led the way for them? Why, the Bank and the government. Who had encouraged and fostered extravagant expenditures? The same parties. And yet, with this experience before their eyes, people were found to ask, who and what had caused all this wild and extravagant speculation? The Bank at length found itself getting into an awkward predicament, and began to waver between the influence of its two gods—the god gold, and the god government. Then, out went Exchequer-bills for sale into the market, and again went on the rage for speculation. And why should it not? Oh, but it was said, it was overtrading which had done all the mischief. Overtrading did they call it? What was the meaning of the word? It was, when a

man did not succeed, he was nicknamed an overtrader: it reminded him of the distich about treason—

"Treason does never prosper—what's the reason?
Why, when it prospers, 'tis no longer treason."

So when success followed the speculator, then he became the sagacious and adventurous British merchant. But, as he had before said, the government had, from first to last, fostered this spirit, and not foreseen its consequences. Had they last October kept their eyes upon their own system, they ought to have foreseen its re-action. Then, indeed, some trifling assistance might have been afforded, and with beneficial effect. If it were said, that parliament was not sitting at the time, his answer would be—then why not convene them? for a little relief in time would have done what could not now be effected by the largest measure of relief. Some measure of relief at that time would have restored confidence; but unfortunately that period had been suffered to go by. The distress began to be felt, and Exchequer-bills were sold, and the Bank became the purchasers, and afterwards the sellers. The panic showed itself more and more every day. At last parliament met, and then government proposed the measures to which he had adverted. He knew that ministers were beset by men who were clamorous on the subject of the evils they were likely to suffer, and the purchase of Exchequer-bills by the Bank was gladly received as a means by which many of them could be relieved. This measure, however, would not answer the end proposed; nor did he think those proposed by government would have the desired effect. At the same time, he was not one of those who despaired of the country. The distress did not altogether arise from want of capital so much as want of confidence; and he was satisfied that if some measure was adopted, by which that confidence could be restored, the country had the means by which, when it was restored, its affairs would return to their former prosperous course. He thought that if an issue of Exchequer-bills were now made, as in 1793, it would do a great deal of good. But the purchase of Exchequer-bills by the Bank would not have that general effect; for, if a large purchase were made, how did they know that they would by this measure relieve the right man? The man who went into the market on Monday last and purchased Exchequer-bills at 20*s.* discount, would, no doubt, be greatly benefitted by having them raised to par, or at a premium; but the person who had traded, or over-traded, as it was called, would obtain no benefit by it; and perhaps, after all, the man who might be relieved was the last person who was entitled to relief. It was true that the holder of Exchequer-bills must be supposed so far to be a man of property; but, whether he was the man of property to whom relief ought to be extended, they had no means of knowing. Thus, the relief given by the purchase of Exchequer-bills would be altogether uncertain in its effects. A part of the proposed plan went upon the assumption, that the country bankers would not re-issue their small notes any more. He did not believe a word of it. He did not think that any man among them was fool enough to throw 30,000*l.* into the fire, as they were told of by his hon. friend.

Mr. *H. Gurney* said, he had mentioned only 13,000*l.* which were so used by one banker in Yorkshire.

Mr. *Tierney* did not mean to say that his hon. friend had ever been guilty of any thing so imprudent. He was too well acquainted with the system, and knew much better than to adopt that course; but, if such large sums were not destroyed, they might be locked up for a time, until opportunity offered for their re-appearance. In the district in which this burning of the notes took place, he knew there was great distress felt. The bankers alluded to were, perhaps, in a state of great irritation; but that distress would, he had no doubt, be in time removed, and it might happen that the man who had so foolishly thrown his notes into the fire, would be glad to rake up the cinders, and to find some of those notes among them. Again, he would repeat that, in his opinion, all that was wanted in the country was, the restoration of confidence. That would call forth the hoards which were now left unemployed. There was abundance of the precious metals, he also believed, which would be forthcoming, if this confidence were restored. But, the fact was, the country bankers were offended. There was, here and there, a strong expression of blame to them, in the late correspondence of government with the Bank. Perhaps, those expressions were not meant to give offence in the quarter in which it was taken; but it did unfortunately happen that they were taken

offensively. Was the present new course likely to conciliate the country bankers? On the contrary, was there any thing which could be more likely to crush those very bankers than the distinction that was now to be made of allowing the Bank of England to add to their issues of small notes, while the permission was denied to the private banks? Was it not saying, in direct terms, not that the Bank of England notes were so much more certain than theirs, but that theirs were not certain at all? Whatever was the intention, there was no doubt that the country bankers would so feel it. For his own part, he wished well to the country banks; for he thought their existence would be attended with great benefit to the country, as long as their issues were on a solid basis. He would wish to see them generally on the basis of those in Lancashire and London. The evil which arose from them was, not that they had the power of lending money to a great extent, but that they should have the power of making notes for the purpose of lending. If they really had money to lend, they would be a benefit, as long as they could say, "here is the money to lend, provided you give us the security;" but it would, in the end, be no benefit to say, "we will lend our notes," if those notes did not, at the same time, represent real property. He would wish to see the country banks flourish on a wholesome basis. If the country knew of a good security on which to rely, there would no longer be hoards of gold. There would be large paper issues; but they would be, as they ought to be, bottomed on a metallic security. If he were asked what measure would be productive of much good in the present state of the country, he would say an immediate issue of Exchequer-bills for the relief of the commercial distress. That would help many parties through their difficulties, and bring back a sound state of things. But, if government were to do any thing, let them do the right thing. He would not say what sum it might be proper to issue. If the whole sum of 5,000,000*l*., which had been spoken of, were to be issued on proper security (which no doubt, the commissioners would take care to obtain, as they had done before), it would, he was sure, have a most beneficial effect on the country. The money would soon be re-paid—things would speedily come about—the hoards now locked up would get into circulation—the bankers would again hold up their heads—and the country would return to a wholesome state of things. He meant a large circulation of paper, founded on a solid, substantial metallic currency.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he did not rise at that late hour to enter into a discussion of all the topics brought under review in the speech of the right hon. gentleman, nor did he rise to state the grounds on which he should be prepared to show that the opposition he had offered to the measure recommended by the gentleman opposite, was not inconsistent with the measure he himself recommended, nor that it would, in any degree, tend to counteract its effects. But he was anxious to say a few words on what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman respecting the issues of the Bank. He was perfectly willing to take his share of all the blame, if blame there were, as to the conduct which the government had held towards the Bank. He admitted, that the proposal for taking the dead weight proceeded from the government. It was adopted by the Bank, at the suggestion of the government; and if there was any blame belonging to that measure, that blame belonged to the government. But, the government had nothing to do with the Bank keeping those annuities. It might sell them; and that it had not chosen to do so, was entirely its own proceeding. With respect to the issues of the Bank, to enable the government to pay off the four per cent in October, 1824, that measure was proposed by the government, and for it the government alone was responsible. As to the other measures mentioned by the right hon. gentleman, he was bound to say, for it was the truth, that the government was in no degree responsible or to blame. As to the Bank lending money on stock, and thus increasing its issues, he would only say, that so far from its having been adopted at the suggestion of the government, government never knew of the measure being adopted until after it had ceased, and could not, therefore, be charged with participating in it. As to lending money on mortgage also, the government was not responsible for that step. He would say for himself, that he never heard such a measure was in agitation, until the Bank had told him it was done. For that also the government could not be responsible, whatever in-

crease of issues it might have occasioned. Whether that measure was right or wrong he did not say; but he did say the government had nothing to do with it; but if it had not been done, the issues of Bank notes would not have been so great. With respect to the dealings in Exchequer-bills, he would observe, that the only part of that measure for which government were responsible, was that which arose from dealings between the Bank and them, in which they had advanced money upon them. It was not usual for the Bank to issue money on such bills to the public; but as to the selling of Exchequer-bills last summer, it was the act of the Bank themselves, and done on their own responsibility. In adverting to this, he would observe, that the government had not that control over the Bank which seemed to be generally imagined. It seemed to be the opinion of some hon. gentlemen, that government could control the proceedings of the Bank at pleasure. Government possessed no such power; nor did they wish to possess it. He had mentioned these circumstances with the intention that hon. members, in viewing the proceedings of the Bank and the government, would give to each the blame or credit which belonged to them, and not attribute to one what solely belonged to the other.

Mr. *Ellice* said, he would not divide the House, because from the declaration of the chancellor of the Exchequer, he did not think he was opposed to the principle of the measure recommended.

The bill was then read a second time.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Monday, February 20.

CORN LAWS.] Lord *King* said, he had a petition to present from Brecon, in the name of the town; but whether it could be received as such, or only as the petition of the individuals who signed it, he did not know. It was a petition against what he called the landlords act—the job of jobs—the Corn laws. The noble earl opposite had expressed a hope that this subject, when it came to be discussed, would be considered dispassionately; and, for his part, he was very desirous to attend to the recommendation, when the day of discussion should come. The question was—when would that be? In the course of last session he had been given to understand, that the great discussion was to take place in this; but now, when the appointed time had arrived, he was given to understand, that there could be no discussion until the next session. That was as much as to say, that the parliament being now on its last legs, or even on its death-bed, the noble earl was unwilling to disturb its last moments, by giving them this viaticum in articula mortis. Knowing how much the noble earl disliked popery, he could not help being surprised at finding that so great an abhorrer of the church of Rome should be guilty of popish practices. There was no doubt, however, that the noble earl had been dealing in auricular confessions, and had thus learned the sentiments of his landed friends; but, on the subject of the Corn laws, he had found their hearts obdurate, and that they were not in a fit state to receive absolution, or the viaticum. He allowed that the present parliament had done some good works; but it appeared at last to be found wanting in faith; and what were good works without faith? He, however, liked this parliament for the good it had done, as much as he detested the bread-taxing, and six-act parliament of 1815, which, thank God, was now dead and gone, and consigned to the execration of posterity.

BANK CHARTER BILL.] On the order of the day for the committal of this bill,

Lord *King* wished to say a few words before their lordships went into the committee. He had heard a great many bad measures defended in that House by good speeches, and a few good measures also supported by good speeches; but, whether the measures were originally good or bad, it often happened that they had the same result. When a good measure was brought forward, it was sure, some how or other, to be frittered away and defeated. A striking instance of this had just occurred. On Friday night last, when the noble earl had proved to demonstration the advantage of the measure he was submitting to the House—when he had clearly shown that it was impossible for one and two pound notes and sovereigns to circulate together, his whole plan was upset. At the very moment when he was in the heart of his demonstration, the noble lord's lieutenant in another announced that the ribbons of notes of the Bank of England should have a preference over coin. He was sorry to find all the noble earl's arguments

thus overthown and contradicted by his own act. He never could have expected to see imbecility so completely stultify its own measure. He thought that the noble earl and the rest of the House had come to the understanding, that the country was to return to a circulation of specie: he imagined that this was a conclusion to which they had all come. It was allowed that the Bank of England had issued paper to excess, that the country banks also had issued paper to excess, and that there was an excess of paper currency all over the country. Now, however, he expected he should be told that the Bank of England was conducted on the best of all possible systems; that the country banks were managed in the most perfect manner; and that the best of all currencies was that which was formed of those miserable one and two pound notes which the other day, had been so much reprobated. He was afraid that a large portion of the landed interest thought it their interest to keep up the small-note circulation. They liked the high prices of one season without perhaps liking the low prices which followed. It was very delightful, certainly, to have the very good year of 1817, but it was followed by the bad year of 1819, and by the low prices of 1820, 1821, 1822. They might be pleased with the good high prices of 1824 and 1825, but they might be followed by the low prices of 1826. They preferred a machine which worked by jolts and jerks, to one that was even, smooth, and steady, in its motion. It had been declared, that the currency was to be regulated by a gold standard; and so it was; but it took long periods of vacillation—sometimes it was above the standard, sometimes below it; and it was always brought back by violence and disorder. A more dangerous and unsettled and insecure state for property, could hardly be conceived. Though the currency was to be conformable to the currency of the continent, it never was made so but by violent contractions at one time, and hasty extensions at another. There was one blast furnace in London, and eight hundred, for he believed there were so many country bankers, at different parts of the country, at one time all blowing till they had brought things to a white heat, and then lying idle, or not doing half the work they ought. The only cure for these irregularities was, to have an extensive metallic currency. He should like to see twenty or thirty millions of sovereigns in circulation. With a basis of that nature, we might have steadiness of price, and speculation could not thrive. The Bank circulation was confined to a few million sovereigns; and while it was so limited, it was impossible that the motion of the machine should not be irregular, and that it should not be perpetually liable to jerks and jolts. He most willingly concurred in the proposition of the noble earl, that there ought not to be any one or two pound bank notes in circulation: but, the noble earl now abandoned his own proposition; in the language of a once celebrated parliamentary orator, "turned his back on himself," and was willing to allow the Bank of England one-pound notes to remain in circulation. He would willingly concur with the noble earl, should he even go further; and would agree to put down the five, and even the ten pound notes.

The Earl of *Liverpool* observed, that the noble lord, as well as others, had fallen into a mistake with respect to the proceeding which had taken place elsewhere. Nothing had been done or proposed relative to the currency, which was a departure from the principles on which the measure brought forward in another place, or the bill before that House, was founded. He entirely agreed with the noble lord in opinion, that a metallic currency and paper of the same denomination could not circulate together. But, if the noble lord had done him the honour to attend to what he had stated on Friday last, he would not have had occasion to refer to what passed in another place on the subject of the power intended to be given to the Bank. The noble lord would have found, that he (lord L.) had made the very same proposition at the close of his speech. The object in bringing the measures now before parliament was to get rid altogether of the small notes: but, as that could not be safely done at once, it was thought adviseable to make the circulation of that description of currency finally determine at the expiration of three years from the present date. The principle on which the measures were grounded, was the entire extinction of the one and two pound notes; but it was thought desirable that this object should be accomplished gradually. With regard to the Bank of England, he wished their lordships to recollect, that that body had, by a law passed in 1822, the power of

issuing one and two pound notes. But, notwithstanding the full possession of this power, no use had been made of it by the Bank until December last; and then it was not exercised, until after consulting with the government. It was then thought, in the state of embarrassment which existed, that an issue of small notes would be advantageous. The measure was resorted to as a mere temporary expedient, with a view to administer some relief to the commercial pressure which was experienced. He thought it right to say thus much on the subject of the late issue of small notes by the Bank of England, as it was plain that they had no wish to circulate such notes. Indeed, after what had passed between the government and the Bank, no proposition was more clear to him than that it was not only against the wish, but against the interest of that body, to circulate one and two pound notes, and that they had no disposition to extend their issues. Now, as to the ground of the measure to which the noble lord had alluded, and which had been announced on Friday night; it had been found that many of the country bankers, instead of being disposed to let their notes run out, had put an end to their circulation altogether. That, however, was far from being the intention of those who framed the bills before their lordships and the other House of parliament. In their view of the subject, it was necessary that the change in the circulation should be gradual. It became desirable, therefore, to meet the possible case of a deficiency of circulating medium, which the course taken by some country bankers might occasion, to give to the Bank of England the power of issuing small notes for a certain time. This was merely a measure of precaution, to which the Bank had no wish to resort, but which it was thought right to adopt for the convenience of the country. He thought it necessary that a clause should be introduced, giving the Bank the power described; but, when the bill should come before their lordships, he would have no objection to accompany it by any guards which might be considered proper. If the bill did not come up to that House in a satisfactory state, their lordships might amend it by a clause requiring the Bank to return weekly or monthly accounts of their issues. To this the Bank would have no objection; for he was sure they had no wish to extend their issues beyond what the convenience of the country might require. With respect to what the noble lord had said of the mischievous consequences of fluctuation, he perfectly concurred with him. The object of the measures before parliament was to prevent it as far as possible.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* being persuaded that the noble earl was sincere in the object he professed to have in view, felt it impossible for him to suppose that that noble earl could wish to delegate to any individual or body whatever, the power of defeating those measures which he had brought forward, for the avowed purpose of carrying his object into effect. He was willing to believe that it was not the wish of the Bank to abuse the power which might be given, and he was sure such could not be the wish of the noble earl; but, the noble earl could not fail to perceive, that if the clause he had described should pass, unguarded by any restrictions, he would be doing nothing less than giving to the Bank of England a power to defeat the whole of his measure. The noble earl had admitted the impossibility of looking forward to the circulation of small notes and specie, and that the only remedy for this evil was to provide for the influx of gold to such an extent as to supply the place of the small notes. Now, for gold to flow into the country while small notes circulated, was impossible. It would, therefore, be necessary to guard most carefully against the increase of these notes, if the measures now in progress were wished to be effectual. And here it was to be recollected, that their lordships had not the same means of ascertaining the quantity of small notes of the Bank of England in circulation as they had of the country banks, in consequence of the Bank of England not being under the necessity of going to the Stamp-office, but paying a composition instead of stamps. Supposing, then, the Bank were disposed to take advantage of the power about to be given, they would have time enough between this and October to deluge the country with paper sufficient to last during the whole of the three years in which the small notes were to be allowed to circulate. There would, in that case, be no gradual reduction of the small-note circulation: but, at the time when parliament was recognizing the principle, that the circulation of this description of paper was an evil, it would be most inconsistent to delegate to any body an unqualified power to defeat the

measures adopted in pursuance of that principle. The power suggested was one over which parliament could not too strictly watch. However, he was not prepared to say that it might not be so guarded, as to remove much of the objection which he had to it. That the noble earl contemplated the imposing of the necessary guards was what he was bound to suppose; and he trusted parliament would never agree to such a clause, unless it were so accompanied.

The Earl of *Liverpool* repeated, that the sole purpose for which the clause was proposed was, that means might be possessed of guarding against a possible danger. He agreed with the noble marquis, that the power given to the Bank should be accompanied by proper guards, and expressed his willingness, if the clause did not come up in a satisfactory shape, to concur in any amendment which their lordships might consider necessary.

The Earl of *Roseberry* did not mean to enter into any discussion as to the original cause of the commercial difficulties, but would remark, that it appeared to him that the present distress was different from that which first occurred, which was confined to a rush on the banks. He thought that some of the measures of ministers had tended to aggravate the distress, but considered the present a good one, but did not approve of its intended extension to Scotland. If their lordships wished to place the banking system of England on a solid footing, it should be their object to put an end to the pecuniary relations between the Bank of England and the government. He agreed with those who thought that the transactions of the Bank, with regard to the military pensions and the reduction of the interest of the debt, had contributed to the present difficulties; for the circumstance of the Bank becoming purchasers occasioned large issues of notes on inconvertible securities. It was said, that the Bank had the power of selling; but, as the sale of the annuities had been previously attempted by government without success, it was not very clear how the sale was to become so easy a matter to the Bank. With regard to the measure for calling in the small notes, he begged to be understood as limiting his approbation of it exclusively as it applied to England. Every reflecting person acquainted with the state of Scotland, attributed its rapid prosperity, next to the free institutions which, in common with the rest of the empire, it enjoyed, to the system of banking which had long been carried on in that country. He could not, therefore, hear, without alarm, any hint thrown out of an intention to interfere with the currency of Scotland. The noble earl recommended the repeal of the usury laws, the existence of which produced great embarrassment. If the interest of money were placed on a proper footing, it would find its way where it was wanted, and carry relief with it. He doubted whether it would be proper to extend the present measure to Ireland.

The Earl of *Limerick* said, he was one of those who considered that a metallic currency would be most beneficial to the country, and that such a currency could never exist with a currency of paper; but, in Ireland things were very different to what they were in England. There they had no other circulation but the small notes of the Bank of Ireland and the provincial banks, and the withdrawal of them without a full supply of gold would be ruinous to the last degree. He hoped, therefore, that government would take especial care to provide an ample currency of coin, before they withdrew that of the one and two pound notes.

The Earl of *Blesinton* said, that the only danger to Ireland was the withdrawal of the small notes before a supply of gold had been sent to replace them. There had not been for a long time any gold in the south of Ireland, but in the north some gold had always been in circulation. In the south, notes for so low a sum as 3*s.* 6*d.* had been in circulation. Nothing, he thought, would suit Ireland better than the introduction of silver as a legal tender to a certain extent.

The Earl of *Liverpool* assured their lordships, that when a proposition for extending the measure to Ireland should be brought forward it would be his endeavour to give all possible attention to the peculiar circumstances of that country. If Ireland was now recovering from difficulties, the noble lord, he doubted not, would allow that that favourable circumstance was greatly owing to the introduction of the system which it was the object of the bill to accomplish for this country; namely, that of allowing banks to be established by joint-stock companies. As to the paper circulation, its evils never would be cured until it was got rid of by law. It was a curious fact, that after the Bank Restriction act, and during the war,

when not a guinea was to be seen in this country, rents were all paid in the north of Ireland with gold. This supported the view he had taken, namely, that gold and paper could not exist together; either from some law, or rather he believed from the practice of the people, they adhered to the gold circulation, and bank notes were nearly unknown.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, that one cause of that curious fact alluded to by the noble earl, was this, that the landlords of Ireland would only take their rents in gold, so that the tenants were compelled to pay them in that manner. This might have satisfied the noble earl; but, if he had gone further, he would have discovered a circumstance quite as curious as the fact itself; and that was, the mode in which these payments were managed. When rent-day approached, the sum of five hundred guineas was sent down from Dublin, and given to one set of tenants, in exchange for their notes; they then paid their rent in gold; which, as soon it was thus received, was handed to another set of tenants in exchange for their notes; this being repeated till all the tenants had paid their rents, it might be literally said that they all paid their rents in gold. The money was then returned to Dublin, from whence it came, there to remain till another-rent day should require it to make a second journey into the country.

The Earl of *Blesinton* denied this statement, which he characterised as a mere piece of ingenious humour.

The Earl of *Limerick* supported this denial, declaring, that to his certain knowledge, there was not at the time alluded to a single guinea in the south of Ireland.

The Earl of *Roseberry* asked whether it was the intention of ministers to submit to parliament any measure for the suppression of small notes in Scotland, and if so, what was the nature of that measure?

The Earl of *Liverpool* answered in the affirmative as to the first question; but as to the second, he was not prepared to say what would be the exact nature of the measure he should offer.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* rose, to state his conviction, that there was no man of any class, or of any party, who would for one moment hesitate to express his complete satisfaction with the state of the currency as it at present stood in Scotland; nay, who would not declare it to be his conviction, that that part of the kingdom owed the prosperity she was enjoying to the mode in which the circulation was there managed? He would venture to say, that there was no manufacturer of any description in that country who would not tell the noble earl, that the ruin of that branch of manufacture to which he belonged would inevitably follow, if the present circulation were meddled with. He conjured the noble earl and the House to ponder well before they adopted a measure calculated to overturn the prosperous condition of so important a portion of the kingdom.

The House having gone into a committee,

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, it was now his duty to call their lordships' attention to a clause which, upon consideration, it was deemed adviseable to introduce on the subject of branch banks to be established by the Bank of England. It was his opinion, that the Bank had already the power of establishing branch banks in any part of the country which they thought proper. A doubt, however, existed in the mind of the highest authority, upon such a subject, that without some specific clause for the purpose, they would be prevented from giving effect to that power. They had the power to appoint agencies in the country; but then it was doubted whether this bill, in its present form, enabled the Bank to give them the authority of acting on their own discretion, and not as mere agents; for without that authority they could not answer the purpose contemplated in the formation of them. On the authority, therefore, of the opinion to which he had before alluded, namely, that without a specific clause for that purpose they could not exercise a discretional authority, a clause to that effect had been drawn up, which it was proposed to introduce into the bill, in order to enable the Bank to establish branches throughout the country, on such a footing as would render them beneficial to themselves and of important advantage to the country. If, however, it should not lead to the establishment of branch banks by the Bank of England, he trusted that they would have liberality enough to say, that although they themselves were not disposed to act upon this plan, they would not stand in the way of allowing the formation of other banks, on a principle calculated to afford the same advantages to the public. He

was anxious that they should have the opportunity of trying the experiment; and should be sorry that there should be any thing in the state law that would operate as an obstruction to their so doing. With that view, he would propose the introduction of this clause, when the report should be brought up on Friday.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* did not now mean to offer any objection to this clause. He would, however, suggest to their lordships the propriety of introducing a clause providing, in case the Bank of England should think proper to establish branches, that they should be bound to pay their notes in gold, in the same part of the country in which they had been issued. Great inconvenience had been experienced in Ireland in this respect, in consequence of the Bank of Ireland having attempted to refuse paying their notes in gold in the country where they had been issued by their branch banks, stating that they were only bound to pay them in Dublin. The point, however, he believed had been given up by the Bank; but then he had been given to understand, that they had attempted to evade that, by issuing Bank of Ireland notes dated from Dublin. He should hope that no such evasion would be attempted by the Bank in this country; and that it would be provided by the bill, that they should pay in gold in those places where branch banks would be established. He trusted the noble lord would see the importance of introducing such a provision; because, without it, whenever a panic occurred in any part of the country, a run would take place upon other banks, while none could be made upon the branch banks of the Bank of England, inasmuch as they could only be compelled to pay in gold in London.

Lord *Ellenborough* was of opinion, that this was the most important clause in the bill. He was disposed to give every fair facility to the establishment of branch banks; but he greatly feared, that without a very considerable enlargement of the capital of the Bank, branch banks could not be established with any benefit to the country. Under the present system, the branch banks would be counteracted by the country banks; and ignorant of the extent of their circulation, and unable to meet it, they would find it impossible to do that duty which the country would require at their hands. Now, he thought these branch banks ought to have a metallic capital, that would be capable of driving the paper of country banks out of circulation. The more he considered the subject, the more he was convinced, that the fluctuations attending the introduction of this measure would be very great, and he thought it ought not to be introduced unless it could at once be rendered effectual.

The bill was ordered to be recommitted to-morrow.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 20.

PETITION OF MR. KENRICK.] Mr. *Denison* said, he had received a petition from Mr. Kenrick, whose case was before the House on Friday last, with a request that it might be presented. He would, therefore, move that it be printed, in order that it might be in the hands of members before the discussion on Mr. Kenrick's case to-morrow.

The petition was read, and in substance stated, that, about eleven or twelve years ago, James Rose, a constable, at Betchworth, who, he believed, had died in 1816, came to him and stated, that two sheep had been driven from a field belonging to Henry Peters, esq.; that one of them had been much mutilated and killed; that he had found a knife near the spot, which he knew to belong to Franks, having seen him use it; that he had also found near the same spot, a paper which appeared to belong to Franks, and that both knife and paper were bloody; that he mentioned the matter to no one else, until he came to him to ask his advice about the matter; that the petitioner advised Rose, the constable, to say nothing about the affair to any one else, until he stated the circumstance to Mr. Peters, to whom he advised the constable immediately to go; but that Mr. Peters, it appeared, did not think proper to do any thing therein. That, under the impression that these particulars had been communicated to Mr. Peters, he, upon an attack having been made upon him in "The Morning Chronicle," wrote a letter to Mr. Peters, inclosing a draft of an affidavit referring to the circumstances, thinking that they would be remembered by Mr. Peters; but that he found the circumstance had escaped the recollection of Mr. Peters. That upon receiving an answer to the above effect from Mr. Peters, he struck the matter out of the draft of affidavit. That, considering the draft as useless, he

had thrown it aside, and it could not be discovered. He prayed the House to take these circumstances into consideration when they came to discuss his case. The petitioner stated, that he had found the original letter of Mr. Peters, in which it was stated, that Mr. Peters had no recollection of granting any warrant against Franks; and as to the sheep, it was merely a matter of suspicion at the time, and that the real thief had been discovered, tried, and convicted. A copy of this letter was subjoined to the petition upon the same paper.

The *Speaker* requested the hon. member to state in what character this paper was presented; for, as far as he could understand it, there was no proper prayer to it.

Mr. *Denison* said, that the prayer was, that the House would consider the statement. The object was, to have it printed, and put into the hands of members before they entered upon the discussion of the case.

The *Speaker* said, that if it was a petition, the House would be much inclined to receive it, as great latitude was allowed to petitioners, especially to such as stood in the situation of the individual accused. But then, if it was no petition, but simply a defence, that was matter for his counsel and evidence; and he did not know how the House could receive this paper in the double character of petition and defence. It was certainly contrary to the usual practice.

Mr. *Wynn* observed, that the paper was merely a defence, and no petition, and had a copy of a letter attached to it on the same paper, which could not be regularly annexed to a petition.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, that this was certainly a most extraordinary and irregular proceeding. The House had gone into a committee on the charge, and had allowed Mr. Kenrick to attend by his counsel, witnesses, and agents. But, after he had an opportunity of fully making his defence, was he now to come with a statement of his own view of the facts? Any statement he had to make would be made by his counsel; but it was not to be tolerated, that he should proceed in this most extraordinary and irregular manner. How did the case stand with respect to Mr. Peters? He had brought a charge against that most respectable gentleman in his absence, after he had an opportunity of cross-examining him at the bar, and had declined to do so. He expressed his surprise that Mr. Peters should have forgot such and such circumstances; and now wished that this paper should be printed and circulated among the members, when Mr. Peters was absent. If the House had any inclination to do justice, it would not suffer such a paper to be laid on its table.

Mr. *Denison* said, he had considered it his duty to present the petition, and the House would dispose of it as it thought proper.

Mr. *Wynn* wished to ask the Speaker, whether it was regular to present a petition with a copy of a letter referred to in the body of it subjoined to the petition, on the same paper?

The *Speaker* replied, that it was irregular, and that there was the double objection, that the copy only was produced, the original being in existence. It was obvious that the paper could not be printed.

Mr. *Peel* said, that the House certainly would be extremely unwilling to refuse, upon a mere point of form, to hear any thing which an accused person might think material for his defence; but this was certainly not a petition, and no injustice would be done by rejecting the paper presented in this shape, since every statement of that kind might be stated by counsel in the defence.

The petition was withdrawn.

PRIVILEGE OF MEMBERS TO BE EXEMPTED FROM SERVING ON JURIES.] Mr. *Holford* rose, for the purpose of calling the attention of the House to a subject in which, as he conceived, some of its privileges were concerned. He had received, some short time ago, a summons to attend as a juror in the court of Exchequer, and for not attending he was fined. This, he conceived, was contrary to the provisions of the late act for the regulation of juries. In the former act, it was understood, that members of parliament were exempted from attending as jurors during the sitting of parliament, and he had thought that the same provision was continued in the late act. He had felt it his duty to mention the circumstance to the House, but he was not prepared to submit any motion on the subject.

Mr. *Davenport* said, that he was in the same situation as his hon. friend. He had been summoned, and fined for non-attendance.

Mr. *Scarlett* said, that the courts were

disposed to excuse members of parliament from attending as jurors, but not as a matter of right.

Mr. *Wynn* expressed his surprise that the learned gentleman should not be aware of the fact, that members of parliament, as matter of privilege, were exempted from attending as jurors during the sitting of parliament. The duties of a member of parliament were so important, that he thought there could be no doubt that they exempted members from being obliged to attend in any of the courts as jurors. There was a case which the learned gentleman would no doubt recollect, in which lord Hardwicke fined the member for Shoreham for not attending as a juror, parliament not being at that time sitting; but he did not deny the principle, that when parliament was sitting, the member would be exempted from attending.

Mr. *Scarlett* repeated his remark, that the excuse would be admitted by the courts of law, but not recognized as a matter of right.

Mr. *Ellice* said, that he, too, had unfortunately been fined in the same court for not attending as a juror, though an excuse was offered for him by another juror, that he was prevented from attending by his duties as a member of parliament. The court, however, refused to accept of that excuse, and held that the privilege of a member of parliament did not exempt him from attending as a juror.

Mr. *Peel* said, it appeared to him, that there was no doubt that the privilege of parliament did protect a member from liability to attend as a juror, and he thought the decision of lord Hardwicke, just cited, was decisive that it had been so held in the courts. If, however, there now existed any doubts on the subject from the wording of the new act, he thought it should be expressed more clearly; but, as it appeared to him, the thing was already quite clear. If it did not appear in the same light to any of the courts, means should be taken to set the matter at rest.

Mr. *Abercromby* had no doubt that the privilege of parliament did exempt members from being called upon as jurors. If, however, any doubts arose in other quarters, they should be removed by a precise exemption.

Mr. *Wynn* repeated his opinion, that there could be no doubt that members were exempted from attending as jurors by their privilege; but, to set the matter at rest, he would suggest that the question should be referred to the committee of privileges, in order that it might be ascertained by their report, what were the privileges of members in this respect.

Mr. *J. Williams* said, he was present in the court of Exchequer when the fine was ordered to be levied on his hon. friend (Mr. Ellice). The opinion of the Court was not given without a reference to the late act. That act was referred to, and it appeared that the Court did not consider the words sufficient to exempt members on the ground of their privilege. His own opinion was, that it did, and it had always been so held: but the Court was of a contrary opinion; and he would say, only that he did not wish to bring the learned baron of the Exchequer to the bar of the House, that his decision was in contempt of their privileges.

Mr. *Peel* said, he had not made any special exemption of members of parliament in the late bill for regulating juries, because he thought the question already established. An exemption of practising physicians had been made; but it was not conceived that there was any necessity for mentioning what it was supposed had been already so well understood. However, it would be proper that the point should be placed beyond further doubt.

It was then ordered, "That the matter of the said Complaint, be referred to the committee of privileges, to examine the same, and report their opinion thereupon to the House." Also, that it be an instruction to the committee to sit tomorrow.

PROMISSORY NOTES BILL—PETITION OF WILLIAM COBBETT.] Lord *Folkestone* said, he held in his hand a petition which he had been requested to present to the House, and which proceeded from an individual who, he should make no scruple in saying was, in his opinion, one of the ablest men in the country, and he believed, when he informed the House that the petitioner was Mr. William Cobbett, most hon. members would agree with him in this opinion. The petitioner stated, that he had, for the last sixteen years, observed the calamitous effects which had at different times during that period been caused all through the country by the fluctuations which had occasionally taken place in the value of the currency; that

these fluctuations, and the misery consequent thereon, had arisen entirely from the measures of this House, and had always been correctly prognosticated by the petitioner. That the petitioner thought that the plan which was at present under the consideration of the House was deserving of the highest approbation, and that, if it were accompanied with other measures, it would be most beneficial to the country; but that unless it were so accompanied, it could not possibly be carried into effect, and the attempt to carry it into effect would be productive of most disastrous consequences to the nation. The accompanying measure recommended by the petitioner was a reduction of taxation; for the petitioner conceived, as we were now about to return to a metallic currency, that the amount of the taxes ought not to exceed the amount they were at before a paper-currency was adopted. The noble lord concluded by moving that the petition be brought up.

Colonel *Johnson* seconded the motion, and observed, that it was with feelings of great regret that he found the chancellor of the Exchequer had been induced to vary from his original resolutions. Such variation had raised apprehensions in his mind, that something would again occur to defeat the measure, and prevented his feeling any certainty that it would ever be carried into execution.

The Petition was then brought up, and read as follows:—

"The Petition of William Cobbett, of Kensington, in the county of Middlesex,

"Most humby sheweth—1. That your petitioner, perceiving that there is a bill before your honourable House, 'to limit, and after a certain period, to prohibit, the circulation of promissory notes, under a limited sum, in England,' most respectfully begs leave to pray your honourable House to reflect on the evils that may proceed from such bill, if unaccompanied by other measures, which other measures do not appear to be in the contemplation of your honourable House.

"2. That the last sixteen years have witnessed four sudden changes in the value of money; that every change has been attended with great masses of ruin; that, at every change, the working classes have been sunk deeper and deeper in poverty and want, till, at last, they present a spectacle of human wretchedness and degradation, such as the world never before beheld; that all this ruin and misery have been caused by acts passed by your honourable House; and that, previous to the passing of every one of these acts, your humble petitioner has distinctly and publicly predicted the fatal consequences of the said acts respectively, each and every of which has fulfilled his predictions to the very letter.

"3. That, in the above-mentioned bill, now before your honourable House, your humble petitioner sees a design to cause gold and silver to be the circulating money of England, that he knows, as well as he knows that fire burns, that if gold and silver be the circulating money of England, that more than half the present nominal amount of the taxes cannot be levied, without producing ruin and wretchedness absolutely insupportable; and that, therefore, while he expresses his gratitude to your honourable House for your laudable design to restore to the people the security given by his majesty's coin, he most humbly, but most earnestly, prays your honourable House to reduce the taxes to an amount not exceeding that which was their amount before the small paper-money supplanted the coin of his majesty. And your petitioner will for ever most humbly pray,

"William Cobbett."

"February 20, 1826."

Ordered to lie on the table, and to be printed.

Promissory Notes Bill.] On the order of the day for going into a committee on this bill,

Lord *A. Hamilton* observed, that on a former occasion, he had applied to know whether this measure was, or was not to apply to Scotland. He had understood the chancellor of the Exchequer to say, that it was intended to apply to Scotland, at the end of three years. He now understood that the prime minister of the country, had said elsewhere, that the intention was, that the bill should be brought in, but should not commence for three years from this time, and should then take three years to complete its operation; thus extending the period for working its effects over six years from this time. He begged to state, that the agitation now pervading Scotland upon this subject was extreme. The Scotch thought this measure hostile to their interests. It was a very different thing to petition for the repeal of a measure, and to petition against a new measure. He had, therefore, a right

to expect, on behalf of that country, an answer to the question, whether the right hon. gentleman intended to introduce any measure this year to destroy the one and two pound notes in Scotland? There was one reason in particular why he thought he had a right to an answer at this moment. A number of cities and counties were in the act of meeting to petition against this measure, and he had been applied to, to know what was the best time for such meetings to take place. He could give no answer, not knowing whether the measure was intended or not to be introduced this session.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, the noble lord had somewhat misunderstood what he had said on a former evening, as to his having no intention at present to propose the extension of this bill to Scotland. He certainly wished that the bill for England should first be disposed of; for, in his opinion, the state of the two countries with regard to this question was not precisely similar; and although it seemed to him that the measure would be beneficial for Scotland as well as for England, still, as the adoption or rejection of it might be argued on different grounds for the two countries, it would be a very inconvenient and confused method of proceeding to mix, up the two questions and discuss them together. It was, however, by no means his intention to defer drawing the attention of the House to this question, as it regarded Scotland, beyond the present session; for he understood that a very considerable ferment prevailed in the minds of people there on this subject; and it could not be expected that such ferment would be allayed, so long as it remained in doubt what course the legislature intended to pursue with regard to that country.

Mr. *Grenfell* said, that if the new measure proposed for allowing the Bank of England to continue their issue of one and two pound notes should be adopted by the House, he would move that a clause be introduced into the bill, for having a return made every week to the privy council of the number of small notes in circulation in the week preceding; and also an account every quarter of the average amount of small notes issued in that quarter, for the purpose of being published in the London Gazette.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, he could not but admire the dexterity which the chancellor of the Exchequer had evinced on the present occasion. The right hon. gentleman had admitted that he intended, during the present session, to propose that this measure should be adopted in Scotland as well as in England, but still he declined including both countries in the same bill; by which means he hoped to meet with no opposition from the Scotch members in passing the English bill, and, in turn, to pass the Scotch bill by the aid of the English members. The right hon. gentleman seemed to be perfectly well aware of the truth of the maxim "divide et impera." He hoped, however, that he had fully reflected on the difficulty of the task he had undertaken; that he had not miscalculated his resources, but knew where to procure a sufficient metallic currency for England, Scotland, and Ireland; for, notwithstanding what was said the other evening, he had been informed, on the best authority, that a very great part of the circulating medium in Ireland was in one-pound notes. If the right hon. gentleman had seriously considered these matters, and was prepared to surmount the difficulties he would meet with in his present course, he had only to explain this clearly to the House, and by so doing he would at once do away with all opposition to his measures; but, if he had not seriously considered these difficulties, and if he was not fully prepared to surmount them, he would entreat the right hon. gentleman to pause before he convulsed the country, by attempting a measure which could not at present be carried into execution.

Mr. *Whitmore* begged to call the attention of the House to one or two facts bearing on the question before them. He had supported this bill to the present time, and he was anxious to continue that support. He was glad to see the determination of government to carry cash payments, and he hoped the period was not far distant, when they would push the system further than they were now enabled to do. The soundest policy justified such a course of proceeding. The more he considered this subject, the more he reflected upon the large mass of paper which was issued, the more was he convinced, that the principle on which they ought to act was come at, only perhaps it would not go far enough. If they went to the root of the evil, they would do away with the issue of the five-pound notes. If this view were correct, there followed from it, that, whenever there was a large amount

of paper, there was a small amount of metals in circulation, and the gold always accumulated in the coffers of the Bank. This would appear extremely clear to any one consulting the scale to be found in Mr. Tooke's late publication; for in 1789 and 1790, the amount of treasure in the Bank was 10,000,000*l.*, and the amount of notes about 9,905,000*l.*; whereas, in 1791, the notes increased to 11,691,000*l.* This expansion of Bank notes was followed by distress, and the gold was reduced to 3,580,000*l.* Then came another change in our affairs, and the Bank had in treasure, in 1794, 8,608,000*l.*, and in notes 10,159,720*l.*; but in March 1795, the notes increased to 12,432,000*l.*; and in March, 1797, the treasure was reduced to 1,272,000*l.* In 1823, there was a large amount of treasure in the Bank; then came an immense issue of paper; then the spirit of speculation rushed forth, which, no doubt, was fostered and aided by the Bank issues of 1824. But then the Bank saw that their interest would be reduced, and their dividends lessened, if they did not let out their gold. These were facts which could not be gainsayed; and we should guard against a recurrence of such fluctuations. If his views were so far correct, the inference he drew from them was this—that they should not stop where they were, but proceed on, in enlarging the metallic basis of the currency. He did not mean to say, that this should be pressed at the present moment; but if it were not gradually proceeded in, before the next ten years they would find the country in as great distress as it was at this very moment. He did not think the system of his late lamented friend, Mr. Ricardo, beautiful as it was in theory, and captivated as he (Mr. W.) had been with it, was that which would practically work best. The measure which the House now adopted, was but a half-measure; but still there could be no question that the metals must form the basis of our currency. He did not wish to see a spirit of gloom fostered in the country; neither could he believe the rumour which prevailed, of augmenting the value of the currency. With the subject of our currency there was another connected; which he did not now intend to discuss, he meant the Corn-laws. But, of the necessity of their revision he was every day more and more convinced. He had heard a suggestion out of the House, which he thought entitled to some attention. It was suggested, that Mint notes might be issued upon deposits of bullion in the Mint, as they would at once be founded on a solid basis, and possess all the conveniences of Bank notes. He would not further trespass on the patience of the House; but he had thought it his duty to make the few remarks with which he had troubled them.

Mr. *Maberly* expressed his dissatisfaction at the course intended to be pursued by the chancellor of the Exchequer, in exempting the Bank of England from the operation of the measures originally submitted to the House by him, for restricting the issues of one and two pound notes. He considered much of the mischief that had lately been witnessed, to be owing to the powers enjoyed at will by the Bank, in limiting or extending their issues; and that the effect of such conduct on their part was, to render the property of every man insecure. They had issued, in October last, 18,000,000*l.*, which they had suddenly increased, in February following, to 26,000,000*l.* What good reason they had for this sudden increase he did not know; but though it was said to be occasioned by the demands of the country bankers, he rather thought it was at the instance of government, with a view to raise a depreciated article in the money-market. At one time, he believed, that, from these causes, Exchequer-bills had been depreciated in the market to the amount of full 45*s.* per cent; and then, what was the consequence? Why, the Bank of England stepped in and by a large issue of their notes, brought these Exchequer-bills back again to par. But then, did the House take into its consideration the alarming changes of property, which were produced by that operation; the unfair advantages bestowed on some individuals, who might be holders of those bills; the losses incurred by others who might have been compelled to part with them; and the great national evil of any body of men having the power to produce such revolutions in the affairs of the mercantile community? The government had very naturally raised the interest when they suffered this fall, and the Bank, it might be said, could not, after that alteration, refuse to purchase them at the depreciation; but still, although they had produced such changes in property, and interfered in that manner with what ought to have been left to the transactions of private individuals, Exchequer-bills again fell, after

every effort, to 25*s.* discount. Now, that was precisely the evil the country complained of. First, government, at their pleasure, added by issue, the vast sum of five millions of Exchequer-bills to the quantity in the market; that was an over-issue, and although they had increased the interest, the bills became depreciated and could not support their price. Then they adopted another system, and allowed the Bank, by their authority, to purchase up two millions of these same bills from the hands of private individuals. On Saturday last, to be sure, Exchequer-bills were only at par. But again he begged to press upon their attention the injurious effects of such repeated intermeddlings upon the affairs of mercantile men, and the alterations which they were likely to effect upon the property of Exchequer-bills with reference to their holders, at the time when the Bank or the government might determine upon bringing their operations to bear on the market. The next point he would advert to was, the issue of notes by the Bank of England. Of that he begged to observe, that the over-issue did not, at all times, proceed from the fact of prices being considered too low, nor did the Bank always contract their issues because prices were too high. They very frequently issued and contracted for the purposes of bringing the exchanges right. When the exchanges were against this country, they contracted the amount of their notes; when they had succeeded in bringing them in favour of this country, they again extended their issue, affecting, in the mean time, most seriously, all the property of individuals, and all the varied transactions of an extensive commerce. Some idea of the extent of that evil might be given by the plain statement of the fact, that the difference of the issues at these periods was that of the amount between 18 and 26,000,000*l.* Government, he knew, had large fixed advances to make on account of what was called the Dead Weight, and which they necessarily paid in Exchequer-bills; and they were, therefore, compelled to make issues of that paper; but he was not at all prepared to make the same allowance for the changes at different periods in the issue of Bank-notes. The first proposition to which he would call the attention of the House, and which he would propose as an amendment to the measures of the right hon. gentleman, and as a means of guarding more effectually against the evils which were sought to be remedied, was, that on the 15th of every month, the Bank should publish in the Gazette, an account of all the Bank-notes issued by it in the course of the preceding month, and, including, at the same time, an account of the whole extent of their notes in circulation at the period when the account should be published. That notice regularly put forth, would have the effect of checking the progress of any such alarm and distrust as they had lately witnessed, by giving proper publicity to the proceedings of a body which must always exercise such influence upon the affairs of the country. What was that publicity that it should for a moment be opposed? Why it was no more, nor so much as the Bank of France had always done. That Bank published an account of its issue of notes, and of gold, the extent of its discounts, and the amount of its profits; in short, it laid every part of its concerns fearlessly open to the inspection of the whole kingdom. And he was quite sure, that, by adopting a similar course, the Bank of England itself would be safer; the public, beyond all question, safer; and the right hon. gentleman, by giving his consent to such a proposal, would render an essential service to the commercial world in general —another point he would recommend related to the exchanges. Great differences took place at various times in the rate of exchange, creating, as he had explained before, an equal difference in the issues of the Bank of England. Now, to guard against that evil, and to avoid such differences, he would advise a re-consideration of the question of exchanges in general, so as to arrive at a better conclusion as to what was the real par of exchange. Opinions varied very much among commercial men as to what was the real par; and he would suggest a revision of the subject, preparatory to a regular publication of the rate of all exchanges in the London Gazette. By such a measure they would render persons not immediately resident in the metropolis able to regulate their affairs connected with those exchanges in a very different manner from the way in which they managed them at present; and perhaps in the end put a stop to the extensive fluctuations which had been visible under that head during a very short period. Another clause he would propose was, that there should be published in the Gazette, on the 15th of every month, an account of all the Exchequer-

bills issued during the month, as well as an account of all paid off or received in payment at the Treasury during the same time, and including the whole amount of the Exchequer-bills at the period in general circulation. For his part, he never could see the policy of granting a large amount of Exchequer-bills to be at the disposal of the government, and to be issued in quantities of four or five millions to-day, and bought up again to effect certain purposes in the market to-morrow. The House would see what a power they granted to ministers, when they consented to a vote of thirty millions of Exchequer-bills to be drawn for the public exigencies, without at all inquiring into the necessity of such a grant, or examining the consequences likely to ensue from its exercise. It was true, the chancellor of the Exchequer had only thought proper to apply for a vote of ten millions for the public service at present; but he would maintain, that unless some such measure was adopted as he intended to propose, by which the public could ascertain, at stated periods, with certainty, what were the dispositions of such a powerful force of Exchequer-bills, they still must, even with a limited issue, be subject to the same fluctuations as those they had lately experienced.—There ought, he conceived, to be also another statement published in the same manner, and at the same time, of the quantity of imports and exports which may have taken place at certain intervals. The fluctuation in the imports and exports was very considerable. In the last twelve years, he understood, the exports had exceeded the imports by a very large sum. Some people, indeed, had said two hundred millions, but that calculation was manifestly erroneous. At all events, it only shewed more clearly the necessity of adopting some plan for putting the country in possession of the true nature of their commerce; so that the public may no longer be misled as they had lately been by erroneous statements. These were the principal measures he had to propose, and he could not but hope that the House would agree, that the evils they went to obviate, required the speedy application of some effectual remedy. If they adopted those which he had brought under their notice, he felt convinced they would in future be free from those melancholy fluctuations and extraordinary panics, of which all had felt the effect, but few could rightly explain the cause. In recurring to the measure of the chancellor of the Exchequer, he would say, that, after the able arguments and reasoning applied to it on a former occasion, by an hon. relation of his, it was not in his power to add any thing further; but he would take leave to mention, that he understood the bankers of Scotland to be in great alarm and agitation with respect to the measures of the right hon. gentleman, and excessively anxious to know at what precise period he proposed to carry his measure, upon the subject of their circulation, into effect. Under every circumstance, he could not conceive that any declaration as to time could at all injure the principle which the right hon. gentleman had taken as the ground of his operations, while the certainty of the precise intentions of the government would be of great importance to the bankers of Scotland in the present situation of their affairs. He therefore implored his right hon. friend to speak out, and perfect his system by removing all doubt and uncertainty.

Mr. *Hume* said, he was fully aware of the anxiety, on the part of the House, to go into the committee; but he must beg leave to detain it for a short time, while he made a few observations. He was sorry to say he could not, after the most serious attention to the subject, bring himself to consider that there was any sound principle of policy in the measure which had been proposed by the chancellor of the Exchequer as a remedy for the evils they had lately suffered. If they took a review of the sentiments delivered by that right hon. gentleman on the occasion of his submitting his proposition to the House, and observed, that he attributed all their misfortunes to the issue of six millions, or four millions, as it was at one time stated, although he believed it not so much as either, of country bank-notes, he was sure they would see grounds for doubting the propriety of the remedy which had been proposed. In his opinion, if the exchanges had been against this country—and against it, at one time, they were—the evil was not at all occasioned by the issue of Bank-notes, and it had, he believed, cured itself by operations altogether independent of the Bank of England. Their issues had not, therefore, remedied that which was clearly remedied without them. Ministers had asserted, in their famous Letter to the Bank directors, that

all the evils of that, and every thing else, which created the panic and distress of the late season, proceeded from the system of issuing notes by country bankers; and had been very liberal of their charges against the whole of that body. In that charge of issuing too many one and two pound notes, they had, however, mistaken assumption for proof; for if they looked to the assertions of the bullion committee, they would find, he apprehended, that the whole of the data upon which that letter proceeded, ran counter to the declarations put forth in the report of that very committee. He remembered, he would just observe, upon the presenting of a former petition from the same individual (Mr. Cobbett) who had that night excited the attention of the House, in which he broadly asserted, that an issue of gold, and paper convertible into gold, could not exist together. The right hon. gentleman and others had held as an argument against the petitioner, and as a proof of his statements being contrary to experience, that, so sensible were the exchanges of any extraordinary overflow of paper, it was not possible for it to affect them beyond one per cent; for that, whenever the difference reached that amount, the surplus quantity of paper immediately indicated itself, and of course received instant correction. The bullion committee in their report, had laid it down as an incontrovertible principle, that there were no means of guarding against an over circulation of paper, except by making that paper immediately convertible into specie. Now, he would be glad to know at what period of the last three years, all paper, Bank of England and country, had not been instantly convertible into gold upon demand. If it had not been so, the paper currency would have been depreciated. If it had been so, then the measure proposed by the bullion committee had been altogether inadequate to the purpose for which it was intended. Much stress had been, indeed, laid upon the circulation of paper, but he confessed he preferred a paper issue; and, if it was convertible into gold upon demand, he would set no bounds to it but the wants of the country; for it was universally known, that much more might be wanted at one time than at another. He would go further and say, that much more might be required in the month of February than in the month of January, for the supply of commercial necessities; and that if the issue required was in one month 21 millions, there might be very readily 25 millions required for the same demand in the next month. How, then, could it be said, if that was admitted—and he did not see how it could be denied—that the issue of three or four millions of country one and two pound bank notes could affect the whole commercial prosperity of the country. He maintained, that they had taken an unsound principle, when, with the paper convertible into gold, and therefore undepreciated, they could assert, that 25 millions of such paper could be called excess. They had, in fact, been only carrying into effect the report of the bullion committee; and if they were now about to depart from the principle laid down in that report, and insist that a metallic currency was absolutely necessary to the country, they were the causes of all the difficulties which had occurred, and the whole distress must be laid at their door. It behoved ministers, therefore, to consider the evils they were inflicting on the country; for the individual, who fancied himself worth 10,000*l.* one month in government securities, might find himself in another month, by the fluctuations which took place in consequence of this measure in the value of all kinds of property, not worth more than half that sum. Admitting, however, for the sake of argument that which, in point of fact, he must ever deny, that the over-issue of paper had created all the mischief, still he would ask the right hon. gentleman whether he meant to say that that over-issue consisted in the increased circulation of the one and two pound notes from 2,000,000*l.* to 4,000,000*l.* and not in the increased circulation of 5*l.* notes, which were trebled within the same period. If the over-issue were the cause of the evil, why was not the issue of 5*l.* notes to be restricted in the same manner as that of the one and two pound notes? If the principle were correct in the one case, it was equally so in the other; but, if it were applied to the 5*l.* notes, how was the circulation of the country to be conducted? Did the right hon. gentleman mean to say, that the commerce of this country could be carried on in a metallic currency alone? Surely not. He had seen in India the inconvenience occasioned by having nothing but a metallic currency. If half a million of money had to be transported for the use of government from one part of India to another, it could not be done

except through the instrumentality of two carts, and a guard of Sepoys. The inconveniencies of such a system were so great, that the supreme government of that country had been obliged to establish a bank for the purpose of removing them. It had established it almost on the same principles that the bank of the United States was established. The government had a share in it, but was not allowed to borrow from its funds, which were left to the management of some of the most respectable inhabitants in Calcutta. He merely mentioned this circumstance, as a proof that neither in England, India, or indeed any commercial country, was it possible to carry on its commerce in a metallic currency. All his experience and reasoning led him to the conclusion, that in a commercial country it was impossible to dispense with a paper circulation. Upon what principle was it that a competition would be carried on between the paper and metal? If either of them was more valuable than the other, that which was cheapest would necessarily drive the other from circulation—a principle which, in his judgment, was quite decisive as to the inexpediency of adopting silver into the currency in combination with gold. The principle recommended by the bullion committee appeared to him to be that which would best bear the test of examination. The state of the currency, so far as the principle of paper convertible into gold at will was carried into effect, was found unobjectionable, and the evils which were now preying on the country were chiefly to be ascribed to the remissness of ministers, in not placing the country banks on the same stable footing as they did the national bank. But, the system on which the provincial banks were allowed to proceed was such, that the country was left a prey to sharpers and adventurers. If a man without capital set up a shop in town, and had his bills with which he obtained goods accepted by another person with whom he was in concert, such a transaction would be condemned by the law as a fraud, and the parties punished accordingly. Why should not those who set up a banking establishment upon just such pretences to security be liable to the same punishment? He had been told of a person who took a large manufacturing establishment, but was unable to pay the current expenses until he began banking, and in this way he was enabled to go on for some time. It was not the amount of local injury done by such persons that was alone to be lamented; there resulted from the discovery of the fraud, general suspicion and want of confidence. If ministers considered it expedient that the weights and measures of the country should be placed under a definitive regulation, was it not of equal importance that a solid and regular standard should be assigned for the currency of the empire, that it might not be subject to incidental variations, or susceptible of depreciation or increase of value, at the caprice or for the profit of individuals? If the introduction of a metallic currency would not be adequate to attain the objects proposed, it was necessary to have that check which would arise from the immediate convertibility of paper into gold, and that would not be effected by taking the one and two pound notes out of circulation, because the amount of circulation in notes of five pound and upwards, was greater in a proportion of three to one, than that of the one and two pound notes. The right hon. gentlemen opposite admitted, that they were aware of this circumstance, but professed their anxiety to guard the holders of one and two pound notes from loss. He gave the right hon. gentlemen credit for this feeling. It was undoubtedly the duty of government to watch over the interests of all classes, and, as far as they were able, to protect all from loss or injury; and the way in which effectually to afford that protection was, not to suffer any banker to issue one pound notes without giving security to pay the amount of what he so put in circulation. It was strange that ministers would so attach themselves to a plan which could only delude the public by the expectation of relief, and a hope of the prevention of evil, which hope could never be realized. The hon. gentleman, after pressing this argument upon the House, and arguing from the fact mentioned by the hon. member for Newton of 13,000*l.* having been burnt by a banker, that no banker would, under a secure system, persist in issuing his notes, if he found that they were returned upon him too often, instanced the Scotch banks as a proof of his assertion, where they always limited their issues, and checked their discounts, if they found their notes returned to them within a certain period. There was, he repeated, no possibility of an over-issue

of bank notes, so long as they were convertible into specie, and in illustration of this, he would instance the Scotch. Till within a few years, the Scotch bankers were very much surprised that they were obliged, every now and then, to bring 200,000*l.* or 300,000*l.* of bullion from London to pay off their notes. They wondered what was the matter, till it was suggested that they had issued too many notes; and from that day to this, whenever they found their notes returning quicker than they ought to do (for there was a certain time during which they expected them to be out), they immediately contracted their notes; and every bank in England would be obliged to do the same thing, if the same power of convertibility into gold was given to the holder. Instead of the trifling measure of his majesty's ministers, the whole system of banking should be put under the same control. Let a commission be appointed, an office established, and let every banker be required to deposit securities before he issued a single note; and from the deposits so made, let the commissioner be authorized to make up any deficiency, and supply any defalcation that there might be. What would be the result of such measures? They would create such confidence, that every man would be ready to give the poor cash for such notes, knowing that he had a security against ultimate loss, by having recourse to the proper office. These measures would, indeed, establish security and confidence, and prevent the aggravation of existing evils. But more should be done even than this. It would be necessary to take from bankers deposits not only for the amount of their small notes, but also for at least two-thirds of their larger ones, and that their paper issues should be convertible into money by summary process, as was the law of the land in the year 1797. Honourable gentlemen had expressed much surprise when he had read an extract from the act, which enabled the holders of notes, in case of their non-payment, to apply to a magistrate, who was authorized, within three days, to issue a warrant, and levy the amount by distress. The time was afterwards enlarged from three days to seven; and in that state the act continued in force down to the year 1816, but at length it slipped out of the Statute-book—nobody knew how. Let this law be re-enacted, together with the exaction of deposits in the way he had proposed. These deposits would bear interest, so that the system could not be attended with loss or injury to any party.—The House would be surprised at some statements which he would beg leave to submit, in reference to a rumour that had lately gained ground, of two or three banks in the United States having failed within a single week. In consequence of that report, he had made some minute inquiries regarding the most important city in the United States, New York. There were in that city thirty-five banks chartered by the legislature. Private banking was there unknown. Every party who wished to engage in banking enterprises applied to the legislature for its sanction, stating the amount of capital which they wished to embark. They obtained a charter accordingly; but upon what terms? On condition that they should pay up the amount of their capital. These speculations, therefore, could not be started by individuals who possessed no property or substance. The accounts of the banks also were laid before the legislature once a year, whenever it was deemed expedient, and the state of their concerns was so accessible to public scrutiny, that every man knew their real situation, and could estimate the security of their dealings. So ought every banking concern to be constituted. The currency, of which they were the source, was not to be made the mere tool of individual profit, but the instrument of public security and accommodation. Every man ought to be acquainted with their precise condition, and the Bank of England would never be safe until such a regulation was introduced and acted upon in its management. The system of secresy practised by the Bank of England was most fatally pernicious. It created a market between the Bank and the government which was destructive, as his hon. friend the member for Abingdon had said, to every man who was not in the secret; while any person who was fortunate enough to get behind the curtain, had the means of realizing a princely fortune. The discounts of the banks in the United States amounted to thirty-three millions of dollars, while their entire capital did not exceed thirty-five millions. How would this appear when contrasted with the Bank of England, which, with its enormous capital, of eleven millions sterling, never suffered its discounts to exceed two millions, or two millions and a half,

yearly. The banks of the United States fully realized the principle of affording commercial facility; while the Bank of England was perfectly innocent of any such offence. Happy would it be for the country if such a statement could be made respecting the Bank of England. He insisted that every bank ought to be compelled to give deposits to the amount of its issues. It was a fact worthy of observation, that of the thirty-five chartered banks in the United States, to which he had alluded, since the year 1815 not a single one had failed.—He would say, then, that the measures proposed by ministers were not competent to the ends which they were designed to effect, and he would repeat that for every pound that should be lost to the rich or to the poor man, and for every bank which should break henceforward, those ministers would be answerable; since they had the power, and on them devolved the duty, of averting these calamities. They did not sit in their places to please themselves only, but to perform most important duties; to protect the meanest individual in the country, as well as the highest. And it could be proved in a committee up stairs, that measures might be suggested, which would be most likely to prevent the recurrence of the evils that now pressed upon us. Every man in the kingdom ought to hold government responsible for those evils, should they refuse such a committee. It was very true, that responsibility on the part of government was, now-a-days, a matter rarely insisted upon; but hon. gentlemen must see, that if it were pressed a little more frequently and urgently, it was a subject the agitation of which might be attended with the most beneficial effects to the community. He now declared, and very gravely, to the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer, that it was he who had encouraged the mad speculations that the whole country was lately immersed in, to their greatest height; it was he who had cheered and hurra'd them on, as it were, by talking about the unbounded and indisputable prosperity of the country. It was the right hon. gentleman, who by such conduct had aggravated the mischief to which those rash and dangerous undertakings had led. He was chargeable with the evils that had ensued, and was bound to administer a remedy. From all that had passed, he would draw the conclusion, that until the Banking system should have been placed upon a proper footing, there would be no security against the recurrence of dangers and difficulties, which were attributed to the over-issue of paper money, but which, in his judgment, had their origin in different causes.—He would now come to his view of the cause of the present distresses. His opinion on this subject was, to a certain degree, mixed up with others which he had already offered to the House. The principal cause of the present condition of the country arose from the act of the government, in reducing the interest on money in conjunction with the Bank. These operations had not been conducted in a manner, and upon principles such as extensive measures of this kind should always be conducted upon, by the ministers of the Crown; but they had been measures bolstered up, conformably with the views of the Bank and other public bodies with which the government ought to have had nothing to do. The conversion of some of the public securities, and the reduction of the public debt proposed to be effected thereby (and sure he was, that nobody was more anxious than himself for every possible diminution of that debt) should have been set about and effected in a fair and honourable manner; not in the underhand way in which government had proceeded in it, calling upon the Bank to make advances for the purpose beyond its means. If he was correct in his notions, other operations were the first causes that had led to the lamentable results by which we were now surrounded. For what had followed upon this commencement? Why, those very gambling speculations, of which a great deal too much had been said by gentlemen in speaking of their effect in producing the present condition of things; although, no doubt, they had had their effect, and a very considerable one, upon it. Certain it was, that in this manner had been generated the excessive confidence, as between man and man, which had directly led to that enormous over-trading which he looked at as the great cause of all the difficulties of the time. The chancellor of the Exchequer, in his speech on a former evening, had laid no great stress upon this topic, but had left it to be enlarged upon by the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade, who had certainly attributed to this cause the major part of all the present distresses of the commercial world. In consequence of that reduction of interest upon the public securities, which he had spoken of, individuals naturally enough became ani-

mated with a desire to increase the interest of their capital by speculating in a variety of joint-stock companies and extravagant projects. But, he begged to say, that this feeling was not occasioned, as some appeared to suppose, by the facilities of a paper circulation. In the year 1720, when there were no Bank-notes at all, or rather, when the Bank-notes in existence were but to a trifling amount indeed, the same extravagance of speculation was witnessed, and perhaps even to a greater excess. Of the nature and extent of the wild schemes and projects of that time, the hon. member for Northampton had recently given the House some account, from an authentic paper. Now, if the right hon. gentleman would persist in attributing our late mercantile distresses to the issue of a few millions of paper money, he would beg to ask, what could have been the cause of a similar pressure in 1720, when there were scarcely any Bank-notes whatever; and what had produced that same species of calamity again, in 1793? In point of fact, the same evils would have happened at present, had our's been purely a metallic currency. The same causes would have produced the same effects, whether that currency had been of gold or of paper. Those causes, assisted by the conduct of government, and the measures carried on by the Bank, had created, he was warranted in saying, such a degree of commercial confidence, that it was scarcely possible to say what limits men were disposed to set to their dealings. The consequence had been losses to so vast an extent, as sufficiently to account for our present melancholy situation. He held in his hand a paper that had been drawn up by a very intelligent gentleman on the Stock exchange, who possessed the best means of obtaining authentic information on the subject, and who had there noted down the total amount of capital absorbed by all these joint-stock schemes, since the close of the year 1823. Now, he thought that, while high-flown praises were lavished from so many quarters upon the Bank of England, that they ought to be called to account for having done every thing to increase that fatal excess of confidence. Was it, or was it not, true that the Bank had lent to Mr. Rothschild, at one time, upon deposits of stock, one or two millions sterling, which advance, from the peculiar circumstances under which it was made, had had the effect of carrying so much gold out of this country, for the political and other purposes of the foreign states to which it was transmitted. This was one of the matters about which he was very desirous that a select committee of that House should be empowered to inquire. This was one of the causes which had excited the fever of the mercantile interest, to the height it did at last attain to; and which, being withdrawn, had suddenly thrown every body back upon his own resources, and had led, in short, to the general panic, which had proved so disastrous in its operation. It appeared to him quite possible that the evils he spoke of might by this time have quietly expended their influence, had they been left to work out their own cure, and had not ministers interfered to prevent such a result; and by their interference to add to the mischiefs that had been previously called into existence. He held in his hand an account of the sums which had been raised in England in the years 1824 and 1825, in the shape of foreign loans, and to which, as they were the means of taking away the actual capital of the country, he was much more inclined to attribute the existing pressure than to any of those causes which had been before mentioned. The hon. gentleman then proceeded to state the following.

[*See next page*, No. 1.]

It was observed, that the Austrian loan did not take much specie out of the country, having been a transaction principally in paper. So that altogether there had been 25,200,000*l*. of capital of loans, contracted for in 1824, of which the principal money received on account of the parties raising them, was about 20,000,000*l*. sterling. From this amount, deducting the sums retained in this country for payment of dividends, interest, and so forth, there appeared a balance of somewhere about 12,000,000*l*. of actual capital, on account of these loan speculations, to have been really paid away, abstracted from commercial purposes. Then, for 1825, the paper gave the following statement:— [*See next page*, No. 2.]

The hon. gentleman proceeded to state the total capital of foreign loans at present the subject of speculation in the British money-market, to amount to 33,769,571*l*. The total loss accruing to the nation by the fall of price on this capital, below the contract price, 6,496,295*l*., and the total loss on this capital, as shewn by the present market price, 9,796,440*l*. Thus it would appear,

No. 1.—ACCOUNT of all FOREIGN LOANS raised in ENGLAND during the year 1824; and an ACCOUNT exhibiting the country contracted with, the capital stock created during the same year, and the balance of money actually remitted from ENGLAND on ACCOUNT of FOREIGN LOANS, either in money or produce.

Date of Contract.	Country contracted with.	Capital Stock created.	Balance of Money actually remitted from England on account of Foreign loans, either in money or produce.
1824.		£.	£.
January	Portugal .... 5 per cts.	1,500,000	690,000
Ditto	Mexico .... 5 per cts.	3,200,000	844,000
Ditto	Austria .... 5 per cts.	3,500,000	170,000
March	Greece .... 5 per cts.	800,000	252,000
April	Colombia .... 6 per cts.	4,750,000	3,157,500
May	Peru............. 6 per cts.	750,000	468,750
July	Buenos Ayres .... 6 per cts.	1,000,000	540,000
August	Brazil .... 5 per cts.	1,200,000	616,000
November	Naples .... 5 per cts.	2,500,000	775,000
December	France, 5 per cents. during the course of 1824.	6,000,000	4,992,000

Total capital stock created in 1824 .... £ 25,200,000
Total sums really paid away for Foreign loans .... £ 12,505,250
Deduct Austrian Repayment 2,500,000

Balance money paid by England in 1824 for foreign loans .. £ 10,005,250

No. 2.

Date of Contract.	Country contracted with.	Capital Stock created.	Balance value actually remitted from England on account of Loans, either in Money or produce of Labour
1825.			£.
January	Brazil .... 5 per cts.	2,000,000	1,060,000
February	Mexico .... 6 per cts.	3,200,000	1,861,500
Ditto	Greece .... 5 per cts.	2,000,000	760,000
March	Denmark .... 3 per cts.	5,625,000	1,757,500
May	Peru .... 6 per cts.	616,000	388,080
July	Guatemala ...... 6 per cts.	1,428,571⅛	244,543
September	Guadelajara .... Commercial Bonds 6 per cts.	600,000	288,000

Total Capital Stock created in 1825 .... 15,469,571⅛
Add capitals created in 1824 25,200,000

Total Capital of foreign loans created in the years 1824 and 1825 .... £ 40,669,571
Total amount actually paid for foreign loans, 1825 .... £ 6,359,623⅛

that the contractors and others concerned in the foreign loans, raised in England during the last two years, were now sustaining a loss—between the present price which they could obtain in the market, and the price which they gave for the loans to foreign governments—of six millions and a half of money; and if we viewed the loss as exhibited by the high prices prevailing in the markets in the early part of 1825, compared with those which could be obtained for foreign bonds at the present moment, there was a loss sustained, by one or other of the parties engaged in them, of nearly ten millions of money; but this last observation affected those who had been buying and selling in those foreign bonds, and those who, having purchased them at any price, were holders at present. Thus we had a loss of ten millions in foreign bonds, added to six more of gambling losses in mining shares, six millions locked up, and four by the high price of goods, making altogether, or changes of property, or both, to the extent of at least twenty six millions sterling.

Many of these shares, which were at one period at so high a premium as 200 or 300 per cent and upwards, were now reduced below par, and were not convertible to the least useful account. Such a system must inevitably be productive of infinite misery. Independent of the mischiefs resulting from these extravagant loans and speculations, the calamity was heightened by the increase of importations of cotton and other articles of merchandise over former years, and over a commensurable demand for them. This item might, in the absence of official documents, be thus estimated. The excess, from comparison of the prices current of 1824 and 1825, had been found to consist principally of wool, cotton, timber, coffee, silk. Increased stock of cotton, 220,000 bales; of silk, 1,600,000lbs.; timber, coffee, dye, goods, wine, &c. about the value of 1,300,000*l.* The total value of these articles of increased importation was about six millions of money. All these articles, he supposed, were locked up in warehouses; as there was no suitable demand for them to cause them to be withdrawn from thence. The following was the statement, up to the present date, of the advances made on foreign loans, mining shares, and adventures, &c. which shewed the total money and labour expended, for which the market was wanting:—

Advanced for Foreign Loans..	£8,125,753
Ditto, Foreign Mining Schemes and Adventures	3,097,000
Ditto, for excess of import of Goods, valued at the present low and ruinous prices	6,000,000
Ditto, for more paid for the Goods imported in 1824 and 1825 than can now be obtained, or has been obtained for them by sale, since they were imported, ten per cent. on the total import of 1825, 36,000,000	3,600,000
Total money and labour expended, for which the Market is wanting	£20,822,700

This sum, added to the four millions to which he had adverted, by the high price of goods, would make a total of nearly 25,000,000*l.* abstracted from the country. —Another injurious effect on the commercial state of the country, produced by the recent panic and distress was, an actual alteration in the mode of doing business. Formerly, a merchant who exported goods to South America, could obtain money in expectation of the payment for these goods, which would be made on their arrival abroad, either in the way of money, or of the return of some article of merchandise. But this was no longer done. Such was the effect of the distress, and of the panic, which was an aggravation of the distress, that distrust prevailed where confidence prevailed before, and the ordinary transactions of commerce were diverted from their accustomed course. This change and disorder in mercantile business, and this large abstraction of a capital of from twenty-five to thirty millions of money, both of which were the effect of overtrading, accounted in a much more satisfactory way for the distress under which the country laboured, than the attempt to account for it by the over-issue of a few millions of one and two pound notes. It was altogether impossible that such results could have proceeded from causes so trifling in themselves; and it was his perfect conviction of this fact that induced him to object, as he now did, to the proposed remedy. To attempt to relieve the existing distress by withdrawing notes from circulation, would be worse than useless—it would be injurious, and could have no other effect than that of increasing the evil. There was only one way of supplying the vacuum which that measure would occasion; that was, by supplying the deficient capital. But the withdrawing the notes would necessarily occasion the conversion of their amount into gold, and this, which must be estimated at 6,000,000*l.*, being added to what he had before stated, would make the whole amount abstracted from the capital of the country nearly 40,000,000*l.* In such a state of things, then, could the government justify, upon any ground of policy or expediency, the withdrawing those issues of paper money which, whatever objections might have been alleged against them at other times, the present exigencies of the country made necessary for its relief?—Before he sat down, he would say a few words respecting the joint-stock companies. Notwithstanding all that had been said on this subject, he did not believe that they could have had the effect of withdrawing from the country one pound of its capital. All the transactions which had taken place in those

companies had been between individuals; and he thought it most likely that the greater part of the speculators in those shares would find themselves, upon balancing their accounts, just where they were when they began. This, therefore, ought not to be brought into the account of the causes of the distress. It was true that when the fever was at its height, these shares were passed from hand to hand with the same facility and rapidity as commercial paper, if not as Bank-notes. Great variations had taken place, from time to time, in the value of those shares; and it appeared from a statement which he held in his hand, that many of them had fluctuated from 500 to 600 per cent, which were now below par. It had been calculated, that the whole amount of them had reached between twelve and fifteen millions. The amount of money which they had actually taken out of the country was *inconsiderable*, compared with the nominal value of the shares. He had learned, that, upon the Anglo-Mexican, the Anglo-Chilian, the Anglo-Peruvian, and other companies, the objects of which related to foreign countries, the whole amount of money paid up did not exceed 3,097,000*l.*, and, of this sum, that not two thirds, scarcely one-half, had been sent out of the country in the shape of machinery or otherwise. The speculation in these shares, then, could have had no other effect than that of raising the spirit of too great confidence in the commercial world, and this to no very considerable extent.—Another evil, and a much greater one, which had been produced by the government and the Bank, was the great increase of prices in all articles of general consumption—an evil which was felt universally, and which would be painfully and intolerably augmented by the sudden introduction of a metallic currency. The government, by adopting this measure, would only prove themselves to be disciples of Mr. Cobbett; they would give the most forcible confirmation to the system which that individual was continually preaching up; they would echo the alarm which he was incessantly sounding, and would actually produce the very evils which he had attempted to excite, and had hitherto attempted in vain. As the law at present stood, all the advantages which could be produced by a paper currency, convertible at will into gold, might be obtained. To alter this would produce incalculable mischief, and would make it impossible to collect that immense load of taxation, with which ministers, by their extravagance, had burthened the country. To relieve the enormous expenses of our establishments, for which a sum of 27,000,000*l.* was annually wrung from the people, would go further towards remedying the evils than any of the measures which ministers were so ready to follow; and it might be wise, in this respect, to accede to the petition which had been just presented for returning to the amount of taxation which, in 1793, had been found sufficient. The twenty-seven millions wanted to carry on our civil establishment, together with the payment of twenty-eight millions more, the interest of the national debt, was too large a sum to expect to raise in revenue, after so many millions as he had stated had been abstracted from the capital of the country. This they should bear in mind—that as to one part of the community his measure would have no operation—he meant the labouring classes, who could only be paid out of the capital, in whatever shape it might be taken. He intended to call upon the House to pause before they adopted the proposition of the chancellor of the Exchequer, and to accede to that which he was about to submit to them, for appointing a committee to investigate the nature and extent of the present evil, who would thus be enabled afterwards to come forward with some efficient remedy. If the House thought with him that this step was one which would have a beneficial tendency, he should be for postponing the present motion, until the committee he proposed should have made their report. That would probably arrest in its progress the evil which, great as it was, had now not reached its utmost extent, and which unless it should be promptly remedied, would involve in distress and ruin millions who were at present untouched by it. He must make one other remark with respect to the Bank of England. He, who had voted so often against the system of hanging by scores the poor wretches who were found guilty of fabricating and passing forged Bank notes, could not see without great apprehension the prospect of all those horrors being renewed. He thought that since the Bank persisted in its obstinate practice of adhering to that clumsy and imperfect form of a note, which every other banker in the kingdom had renounced and since they refused to issue a note which it should be more dif-

ficult to counterfeit, they ought to have no such extraordinary power as that which they possessed. He hoped, at all events, that a clause would be introduced to make the Bank liable to pay the notes which should be forged upon them, as all other bankers were. He declared that his opposition to the motion before the House was, because the measure proposed was inadequate; because the grounds alleged in support of it were not the real causes of the distress; and because its tendency would be, rather to aggravate than to diminish the existing evils. He therefore concluded by moving, as an amendment, "That a select committee be appointed to consider the best means for placing the Banking Establishments of the united Kingdom on a better footing; for securing the holders of bank-notes against loss; and for ensuring a metallic circulation in the country, commensurate with the wants of commerce, and the security of the country at all times."

Mr. *Ellice* rose to second the amendment, not because he coincided in all the opinions of his hon. friend, but because he wished to see the present measure fairly brought before the House. He thought, besides, that it would be advisble to go into a committee on the subject, before the House resolved upon departing from the old and approved practice.

Colonel *Davies* rose to express his disapprobation of the original measure. His hon. friend, the member for Aberdeen, had, in the course of his speech, put forth the principles held by the late Mr. Ricardo, whose disciple he avowed himself to be. The great advantages, however, which were supposed to be derivable from a paper-currency convertible at will into gold, were not so obvious. The efficacy of such a currency had been tried, and the result was now before the House, because such a currency we had at this moment. With respect to the system of calling upon bankers to make deposits by way of security for the notes they should issue, he thought it could never be brought into general operation. He had discussed the subject with a very intelligent country banker, from whom he learnt that the whole of the body to which he belonged expressed the greatest disinclination to act upon such a system. With regard to the observations of the hon. member for Northampton, on the exchanges, he did not think there was such a variation in them as would warrant the inferences drawn from them. The conduct of his majesty's ministers clearly showed, that they were not prepared for these events, and did not see the way out of their difficulties. He was satisfied that they would find themselves involved more deeply, unless they retraced their steps, and returned to sounder principles. He could not see any good reason why the country banks should not continue to issue small notes, as well as the Bank of England, up to the proposed period. Now, supposing the Bank of England to issue a great quantity of small notes—and they might issue them to any extent, because they were not, of necessity, convertible into gold—was it not easy for any one to foresee the consequences? Would not the same difficulties be found in withdrawing all this paper from circulation at the end of three years? He objected the more particularly to this indulgence towards the Bank of England, on acount of the great wealth and influence of that body. His fears were greater still, when he considered how powerfully the Bank of England could enlarge or contract their issues at pleasure—how they could increase or diminish the value of all commodities. He was convinced that much of the present evils were to be ascribed to over-trading. He would not go at any length into that subject, but there were one or two points to which he wished to call attention; for from these he inferred, that the difficulties which had been felt at several periods for the last twelve years, might be traced to the over-issues of the Bank of England. By a paper on the table, he observed, that, in December 1813, the ports of the continent were first thrown open to commercial speculation, the paper circulation of the Bank was 24,100,000*l*. In the short space of a few months, namely, in the middle of 1814, these issues had increased to 25,500,000*l*., making about 1,400,000*l*. above the preceding year. From July to December of the same year, their issues were increased to 28,000,000*l*. making an increase of more than 4,000,000*l*. in one year. Every thing rose in price in consequence. In 1815 and 1816, these issues were contracted, and the diminution of the currency was to the amoun of 9,000,000*l*. The consequence was, general distress, which continued up to the end of 1819, when the Bank again increased its paper circulation. The country banks followed in the wake of the

Bank of England. Again, in the years 1824 and 1825, the increase of paper in circulation by the Bank of England was between three and four millions. It was the Bank of England, and not the country banks, that was the cause of the present misery, and it was the over-issues of Bank of England paper that had caused the over-trading. Matters, indeed, were in such a state, that if a Bank director chose to speculate, he could easily make a fortune; as the Bank could always command a rise or fall in the funds, by limiting or enlarging its issues.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* rose, not for the purpose of entering into any discussion, but merely to submit to the House the situation in which they stood with regard to the business before them. He would leave it to the good sense of the House to decide, whether it was not better to proceed *fairly* with the business of the day, and place his right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, in the only situation in which he could possibly answer the appeals which had been made to him for three hours, without transgressing all order, and contravening not only the courtesy but the convenience of the House. What was very extraordinary was, that the hon. member opposite seemed to think that he was paying something like a personal compliment to the Speaker in pursuing the course which he had adopted. He believed he might venture to say, that the Speaker did not enter into the feelings of the hon. member, and would not at all take it amiss if he were allowed to leave the chair, for the purpose of the discussion taking place, the fruits of which would come before him in the usual way. Gentlemen might, he knew, oppose the question that the Speaker do leave the chair, as often as they thought proper; but, if that course were pursued, there would at once be a stop to all business. He trusted that his right hon. friend would not be betrayed into anticipating what he had to say, and that gentlemen would not object to the House resolving itself into a committee, in which they might state their objections to the principle of the measure, as well as to its details.

The amendment was negatived; and the House having resolved itself into a committee,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the most convenient course to pursue was to proceed with the bill, until he came to that part of it in which he intended to make the alteration of which he had given notice. The alteration would come in at the blank in line 19 of the second page, which he proposed to fill up with the words "at any time before the 10th of October, 1826." If it were the pleasure of the committee that those words should be inserted, it would effect the object which he had in view. There were one or two other blanks in the bill, which he would propose to fill up, and would likewise make some verbal amendments, but not of any importance.

On the question that the first clause be agreed to,

Lord *Folkestone* remarked, that a general alteration ought to be made in the bill, as a consequence of repealing the 37th would be to revive the 15th and 17th of the late king, whereby the holders of small notes would never be able to get value for them, as those acts said they were null and void altogether.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* thought the noble lord had misunderstood the clause; but to prevent any mistakes, it might be as well to omit the word "circulate," if the noble lord thought it would have the effect which he attributed to it.

The *Attorney-General* observed, that the clause alluded to said, that no promissory note should be issued, not circulated: now that was only a prohibition to the issue or re-issue of notes, but not to their circulation by the holders of them.

Some other verbal amendments having been disposed of,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* rose to propose the amendment, of which he had given notice, relative to the power to be given to the Bank of England of stamping small notes up to the tenth October next. He felt grateful to the House for the manner in which they had received the appeal of his right hon. friend, for permitting the Speaker to leave the chair. He had thus, through the indulgence of the House, been permitted at an earlier period of the night to proceed in the explanation of his views on the important point he was about to submit to their consideration, and in removing the many mistakes which, from a misapprehension of its real object, and probable results, seemed to have taken possession of the minds of many honourable gentlemen. He thought it a little hard that he should have been treated as he had been, both

that night and also upon a former debate. He did not at all consider that he could, with propriety, have been called on, or that he was at all bound, as some honourable gentlemen seemed to think, to announce, on a former night, the nature of the amendment he meant to propose, or the motives that led him to such a course. He abstained, therefore, upon that occasion, from offering any reasons for it to the House, because he thought it an inconvenient opportunity. The only favour he then begged was, that the House would permit him to submit his proposition, and to state his reasons for it, at what appeared to him the most proper and convenient time. He did not, however, pretend to complain of the course pursued, and he felt obliged for the opportunity now afforded him. When the hon. member for Coventry (Mr. Ellice), upon a former occasion, expressed himself with so much warmth upon the step which government thought it advisable to pursue, and accused him, with considerable vehemence of proposing a course which he presented as utterly at variance with the principles which he (the chancellor of the Exchequer) had before laid down, he felt that the charge made by the hon. member was unjust, and not borne out by the facts of the case. Having heard the hon. member express himself in such language, and state a serious charge of deviation from principle so broadly, he could not at the moment avoid questioning himself, and endeavouring to call to his recollection, whether the hon. gentleman himself had not shewn a disposition, upon former occasions, of exercising a discretion, as to the time when some general principles, admitted to be right in themselves, should be brought into operation. He was inclined to believe, that if the hon. gentleman, who admitted the justice and policy of those principles of free trade on which government were disposed to act, and who had voted for them, saw any circumstance which might render their application inconvenient in a particular case, and afforded ground for relaxation as to time, he would be disposed, in favour of the particular case, not to be over rigid in the application of his principles. This, however, would appear when the hon. member brought forward the question of which he had given notice, and in which, he trusted, the hon. gentleman would not be successful. It would, however, shew that he himself was not disposed to lay aside all considerations of time and circumstances, and all the suggestions of prudence and discretion, when the question was as to the application of general principles. He would not at present press that point further, but would proceed to state, as shortly as he could, the grounds of the amendment he was about to propose. It appeared to him that the proposition had been greatly, he would not say intentionally, misunderstood. It was necessary for him, in the first place, to state precisely what the nature of the amendment was, and to declare what it was not meant to do, rather than what was intended to be done. He did not mean, then, to propose, that the Bank of England should continue to issue one and two pound notes, when that power was withdrawn from other Banks. The object was, not to give the Bank of England the power of retaining their notes in circulation one moment after the lapse of three years. What did the proposition, in fact, amount to? It amounted only to this—that during the next three years, the small notes of country banks, stamped previous to the 5th of February last, should continue to circulate, and be issuable, but that the small notes of the Bank of England might be issued, though dated subsequently to the 5th February and up to the 10th October. The immediate effect of this would be, to enable the Bank to supply, if circumstances required, for a limited time, and to a limited extent, any sudden vacuum that might be produced by the withdrawing of country Bank paper from circulation. He could not conceive how any person could, for one moment, entertain a doubt, that if the effect of the bill should be to annihilate the circulation of the small notes of country banks, before the lapse of three years, the apprehensions entertained by some, of the inconvenience of the general measure, would not be greatly heightened, if there was no substitute provided by the issue of Bank of England small notes. The original resolution assumed, that the circulation of small notes could not be dispensed with for three years. How could it be contended, that a permission to the Bank of England to issue small notes, dated up to October, was at variance with this resolution? Though he would not admit that there was any se-

rious difficulty or danger in the way of the measure itself, still he never meant to shut his eyes to the consequences that might follow, if country banks were compelled at one blow to extinguish the whole of their circulation. They had had some proof, not very long back, of the danger to be apprehended from a concentrated rush on the country banks, from whatever cause it might arise; they saw the inconveniencies thus produced on the state of the currency, and through that on the general interests of the country, commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing. Whatever other gentlemen might think, he was not one who blamed the Bank of England for its issue of small notes; not because he thought it desirable upon principle, but because it operated to the diminution of an existing evil, that they should have possessed the power, and that they acted upon it, under the pressure of a peculiar difficulty. If they had not exercised it at the time, the mischief would have been more serious and extensive than it had been. The Bank, by the prudence and discretion with which it exercised its power upon that occasion, enabled many to weather the storm, who otherwise must have been completely overwhelmed by its fury. He had given the subject all the attention in his power, but had been unable to discover how a temporary or contracted issue could, by any person who took a candid view of the subject, be at all considered a departure from the principle of the bill. So far from seeing the amendment in that light, it appeared to him, as clear as any thing could be, that if some such provision was not introduced, the measure would, in fact, defeat its object. No objection he had yet heard was tenable in any rational view of the subject. By the principle of the resolution itself, it was expressly admitted, that some delay was necessary, before it could be carried into full effect, and the important end attained, which it was the wish of all to arrive at, namely, a sound state of the currency; such a state as would in future prevent, as much as could be prevented by human contrivance, those fluctuations, which were admitted, on all hands, to be a most serious evil. This being his opinion, he thought that all who supported the original resolution were bound, in consistency, not to refuse their assent to the amendment. They might differ as to the time during which it would be advisable to allow small notes of any kind to circulate, whether those of the Bank of England, or of country banks; but, on the propriety of some such provision as this, he did not see how, upon any rational view of the subject, a doubt could for a moment be entertained. One hon. gentleman was of opinion, that the permission to issue small notes should be limited to two years. Other honourable gentlemen were for four years; but, on all hands, whatever difference of sentiment there might be as to the time, the principle of the necessity of some delay, more or less, was virtually admitted by those who supported the original resolution. The amendment, therefore, they could not in consistency object to, without shewing that, in its nature and probable results, it was calculated to defeat the object of the measure itself. On judging of the effects of the alteration proposed, and the probable mode of its operation, it was necessary to consider for a moment the spirit in which it had been brought forward; and, to do this, he must recur to antecedent events. When, in December last, the idea occurred to the Bank of availing itself of the power it possessed of issuing small notes, his majesty's government felt themselves called upon to express their concurrence in the step; feeling and declaring, at the same time, that it could be justified only by the necessity of the case, and that it was the duty of the Bank so to avail itself of the state of the exchanges, as by judicious and proper arrangements, ultimately to bring about a sound metallic currency. It was in that spirit alone that the measure was assented to in December; and he solemnly protested, whatever might be the insinuations thrown out, as to the object of government then, that if he conceived the most distant idea that it could have the effect of tending ultimately to defeat the great object in view, he would sooner have suffered all the inconveniencies of the time, however great, than have given it his sanction. Was it to be supposed that he could now come forward and propose such an amendment as this, if he thought its tendency was to defeat the establishment of a more sound and a better currency? With sentiments so well known, and so often expressed upon the subject, could he stand up in his place, and subject him-

self to the disgrace of so mean, so paltry, so base, a deception, for the purpose of effecting a temporary object? But, he did not believe that such would be the result of the measure. On the contrary, he felt firmly persuaded that the consequence would be such as both sides of the House were anxious to see attained. It was objected, that if this privilege was granted to the Bank, they would, in the course of a short time, completely deluge the country with small notes. How could this be done? How was the Bank to get out its notes in such profusion? He begged gentlemen to consider the manner in which they must be issued. The only way in which the small notes of the Bank of England could get out was, to enable the country banks to meet any overwhelming pressure, to which they might be exposed. Their issue, therefore, it was quite clear, must be regulated by the degree of pressure on the country banks. The Bank, let it be recollected, did not stand at the window and throw out their notes to all who might be disposed to catch them. The country banks must be a party; and they could have no object in calling for the small notes of the Bank of England, unless circumstances rendered it necessary that they should do so, for the purpose of meeting any demands that might come upon them. The apprehension, therefore, of those who supposed that a complete deluge of Bank of England paper must be the result of this measure, would, when the subject came to be properly considered, be found to be visionary, and totally destitute of foundation. Such apprehensions were quite opposed to that spirit, in which the question was looked at by government, and at variance with the opinions entertained of it by the Bank itself. The Bank could have no object in extending its issues to this fearful extent. They could derive no advantage whatever from it. On the contrary, it must be attended with great inconvenience to them, if their issues should be carried to such an extent as gentlemen seemed to think. Either the country banks would want this aid, or they would not. If they should want it, the assistance given would be limited to the extent and violence of the press upon them; if they did not want it, the Bank of England notes could not, of course, get into circulation. The wants of the country banks would be a control on the issues of the Bank of England, because by their wants, would those issues be necessarily limited. An hon. member had truly observed, in a previous debate, that Bank of England notes were not much liked by people in the country, as they preferred those of the neighbouring bankers. This being the case, what motive could the country bankers have for drawing the paper from the Bank of England, unless to serve a particular purpose? On the contrary, if there happened to be Bank of England paper in his vicinity, it would naturally be the wish of the country banker to have it withdrawn as much as possible for the purpose of substituting his own. Here, then, was a natural check to that unlimited issue, which appeared to be so much an object of apprehension. He must, therefore, contend, that the amendment was by no means inconsistent with the original principle of the bill; and, to convince him that it would produce the consequences apprehended, he must hear much stronger arguments than had been yet employed. Some hon. gentlemen had been pleased to say, with what justice he would leave it to the House to decide, that this proposition was submitted to parliament, because government found itself in a difficulty which it did not know how to get out of. He did not mean to deny that government might not be in difficulties. The circulation itself constituted a difficulty of a very formidable nature. But, admitting the existence of the difficulty, it was rather hard that they should meet with reprobation from any side of the House, because they had recourse to those measures which they considered best calculated to remove it—because they came boldly forward, and without disguising the state of things, submitted to the judgment of parliament, the remedy they deemed most applicable to the disease. In the beginning of the session, he had taken the earliest opportunity of declaring, that it was impossible, in the existing state of things, and after the evils which had recently occurred, for government not to come forward, and declare the view they took of the causes of the evils, of the means best calculated to alleviate them for the present, and prevent their future recurrence, or mitigate them if they should occur. They could, filling the situation they did fill, have acted in no other way. They followed, as he contended, the course which duty and prudence pointed out. They made no concealment of the difficulties they felt. To sit silent in their

places with an air of mystery, to abstain from suggesting any course from a fear of the consequences to which it might lead, or from a sense of the delicacy and difficulty of the case, to propose no measure, even at the risk of being in an error, would, in such a state of things, have been most absurd; a paltry course of proceeding, of which, if government had been capable, he should have felt ashamed.—They were not, then, to be reproached for having acted with precipitation; nor was it more just to say, that because a difficulty did arise, to which they strove, to the best of their power, to apply a remedy, they merely shaped their measures, so as to meet a particular case, if that case should occur. He contended, that such had not been the conduct of government. The measure was not one of mere temporary expediency, but such as, in his conscience, he believed, would be effectual; and not only operate beneficially for the present, but be productive of permanent advantage. Without it they could never be secure against such fluctuations as must always be productive of the most serious inconveniencies; and that being his impression, he should consider the loss of it a great evil. If those hon. gentlemen, therefore, who supported it on principle, and who, at such a crisis, and upon a subject of such vital importance to all the interests of the country, thought it their duty to sacrifice those feelings which were supposed to influence public conduct in the political contests of that House, who gave it that support with no other view, and influenced by no other motive than the performance of a great and vital public service; if those hon. gentlemen now refused their assent to the general measure, in consequence of the proposed amendment, he should feel disposed to conclude, that they acted so from an idea, that an opportunity was afforded them, by this slight change in the bill, of having a little fling at government. He could not bring himself to think that they could be influenced by so petty a consideration, and therefore he must hope, that having agreed to the principle, those honourable gentlemen would not now make any effort to deprive the country of the benefit of the measure. He felt thoroughly persuaded, that the bill was necessary, as a remedy for present, and a protection, against future difficulties; that the modification proposed, was calculated not to do mischief, but great good, and ultimately to render success itself more successful. It was with this view, and with this conviction, he ventured to propose, that it might be competent to the Bank of England to issue small notes stamped up to the 10th of October next. Wishing, as he did, to guard the government, and the Bank, against the probability of a suspicion, that there existed any thing like secrecy, or that there lurked, under this measure, any hidden motive of giving to the small notes of the Bank of England a more extended currency than necessity required, he had intended to propose a clause to provide for the publicity of the amount that might be in circulation, from time to time. That object, however, was secured by a clause in the bill of 1819, by which the Bank was required to publish an account of all the small notes they might issue under it, which account was to be laid before parliament, if sitting, and if not, to be published in the Gazette. This was sufficient to guard against the idea of any combination between government and the Bank, and to defeat any miserable, dirty, paltry trick, if they could be supposed so mean and contemptible as to meditate such a thing, in proposing a measure which they felt firmly persuaded was essentially necessary to the present and future welfare of the country.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, he had never heard a speech that had gone so short a way in producing a favourable impression in support of a proposition, as that just delivered by the right hon. gentleman. He was directly opposed to the amendment, because he conceived it to be quite at variance with the general principles which they all had in view. The great difficulty under which he laboured was the want of ability to do justice to the objections which he felt against the measure; and, in one respect, he concurred with the right hon. gentleman, who had said that his objection would be immoveable, if he thought it could defeat the general principle, in favour of which the House had voted before. But his principle objection was, that the House was called upon to support the inconsistency of the right hon. gentleman, without having had it shewn that any thing had occurred since last Monday to justify the change. And this course was the more objectionable, when we were endeavouring, in the face of the difficulties which beset us, to place our currency on sound and true principles. Nothing was more desirable, than that there should be no wavering or vacillation

in the measures of parliament, to create mistrust in our friends, or give a triumph to our enemies. In what other light could the measure of government be contemplated, particularly in conjunction with the speech of the right hon. gentleman, than as a direct acknowledgment, that, however true in principle the measure might be, in practice the government was obliged to shrink from its execution. The chancellor of the Exchequer had put the measure on its true footing, when he said, that he would oppose the amendment if he thought it warred against the principle to which they were all pledged. What was it but a question of time? The House of Commons ought not to be called upon to support a measure too rapidly, therefore it was most properly described, as a question of time; and such was the impression produced by the whole course of the debate. The right hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department had, as a practical statesman, taken a sound practical view of the case. The right hon. the President of the Board of Trade had expressed an opinion, that if the measure was postponed for a year, it would be a defeat for ever; and yet the chancellor of the Exchequer now proposed, that the plan should be delayed for eight months; for the proposition of the chancellor of the Exchequer was nothing else than to allow the Bank of England a period of eight months to manufacture what quantity of notes they pleased. And was this not calculated to defeat the principle which the House had in view? The right hon. the President of the Board of Trade had resorted to an illustration, and had asked, whether it would be wise to attack an enemy in the hour of his weakness, or wait till we found him in a state of vigour and energy? But, by the present proposition we were told, that we must raise the enemy from a state of weakness to a condition of vigorous resistance, and that in this there was nothing inconsistent with the principle which the House was endeavouring to establish. The chancellor of the Exchequer might, if he pleased, propose on one Monday a proposition which was quite at variance with that of the former Monday; but the right hon. gentleman must excuse him, if he declined following him. The Bank of England, we were told, good souls, had nothing to do with the transaction; but he would appeal to those gentlemen who had attended to the discussions on this subject, whether on any occasion, since the consideration of the bullion question, the over-issues of the Bank had not been placed in the front of the battle. The statement they had constantly heard was, that the over-issues of the Bank had led to other over-issues on the part of country bankers, who then took fright, and then the panic which was created had led to all the difficulties in which the country was placed. Amongst the inconveniencies attending the question, perhaps the greatest was the circumstance of their not having the whole question before the House. There was a bill in progress in the other House; and if report spoke true, it had gone through an important stage that night. Was it not true, that the Bank of England was about to establish branch banks immediately? And the result seemed to be anticipated, that, whether by government or by what other means, the country banks would be ruined. In order to effect this object, all the Bank had to do, was to hire houses in different parts of the country, and to send down a trusty and confidential person to take charge of each establishment, and then they might go on issuing their one and two pound notes until the middle or the end of October. Did the chancellor of the Exchequer suppose that the directors of the Bank, feeling alive to their own interests, would not take measures so to increase the issue of their one and two pound notes in the interim, that the amount in circulation by the end of October would be so great as to preclude the possibility of carrying the proposed measure into effect? It was quite natural that they would; and, in fact, the right hon. gentleman, by this bill, armed them with power so to do. It was, in his opinion, the continuance of a system which, it was admitted on all hands, had already been all but fatal to the country. And what, he would ask, was the security which the country had against the abuse of this extraordinary power given to the Bank directors? There was none. And this alone was enough to induce him to withhold his assent to the amended proposition of the right hon. gentleman. He felt it most singular, most strange, that the chancellor of the Exchequer should have come down with a measure like the present, so very soon after his original statement, and that, too, without the slightest shadow of justification, without the slightest argument to fortify his change of opinion. The reasons now given for the right hon. gentleman's

change of opinion would have been equally forcible on Monday last; and since that period nothing had occurred to justify his change. There was no man more willing than himself to give support and efficacy to any measure introduced with firmness, and maintained with consistency, which had for its object, either the relief of existing distresses, or the prevention of their recurrence. But he could not so characterize the measures lately and now proposed by ministers. They were not only inconsistent with, but, in a great degree, opposed to each other. His great objection to the present plan was the extension to the Bank of England of a right, the exercise of which was taken away from the country banker. This regulation would, if carried into effect, leave behind it the seeds of distresses similar to the present; and those seeds would, in a little time, flourish and thrive, and bring about a return of that eventful crisis of depreciation which the country had so much reason to deplore. He paid no attention to the statements made relative to what would be the conduct of the Bank. This and that had been said, but every assertion made was falsified by a reference to what had already taken place. The principle of depreciation would go on. No rational hope could be entertained of getting rid of these one and two pound notes at the period fixed by law. The only possible hope that such an event would take place was to be found in the fact—that the bill for continuing that circulation would expire on the 10th of October—a period when parliament was not likely to be sitting; and when, of course, there would be no new bill for its further continuance; and it would be too monstrous for any minister to undertake their further issue. This was, at first sight, something like a plausible argument; but a great many things might occur in the mean time to give a colour to a further continuance of that bill; and who would venture to say, that there would not be found, in certain quarters, a power and an inclination to prevent the law from being carried into effect? Besides, would not the Bank itself have the power of doing something which would have that effect? It was said, that the measure formerly proposed would have the effect of setting the question at rest; but now the only security held out to the House was, the speech made by the right honourable gentleman last week. Since that speech was made, however, the measures proposed were totally different; and yet, with an arrangement so different, the arguments urged in its favour were almost, if not precisely, the same. Surely this was a mode of proceeding which, to say the least of it, required explanation. If a large amount of one and two pound Bank of England notes were allowed to get into circulation, what, he would ask, would be the state of the country in the event of a recurrence of panic and alarm such as that which had lately taken place throughout the country?

Mr. *John Smith* said, he differed entirely from his hon. and learned friend who had just sat down. He was as anxious as any man to remove, as speedily as possible, the panic which had recently taken place; but he felt, with the chancellor of the Exchequer, that the measure was not clearly understood. The recent distresses were not, in his opinion, to be attributed to the circulation of one and two pound notes; but to a series of other events. The chancellor of the Exchequer had, in the course of his speech on that and other occasions, talked about giving security to country bankers, but there was another body to whom he wished to give security and support; he meant the company of the Bank of England. What had been the conduct of that establishment in December last, when the panic which had run through the country was at its height? They had come forward with a degree of spirit and promptitude which could not be too highly praised, to support the credit and character of the trading interests of the country. They had, it was well known, afforded the most liberal assistance. Let the House recollect what had taken place in distant parts of the country. Individuals and companies of persons had applied for and received large sums of money from the Bank of England, and when the alarm became great, they turned round upon the Bank and said, "Now, we request you to give us gold for all this paper." The Bank of England had advanced, in the course of one week, more than a million in gold, and finding the demand for assistance still continue, they showed their good sense by returning to an issue of one and two pound notes. This they were entitled to do under the existing law, and had only abstained from doing by a feeling, that their circulation might be avoided without injuring the country. A similar circulation had been continued throughout the

country by country bankers; and he would not venture to say, that the issues, in some instances, had not been injudicious. But, he could assert, that the country bankers generally found out, that the issue of one and two pound notes was productive of little profit, but of much trouble, annoyance, and vexation. He mentioned these as facts which came within his own knowledge. The country bankers narrowing the issues of those small notes, how could the evil have been met, but by the line of conduct pursued by the Bank of England? It was true that a greater quantity of specie would be required to fill up the vacuum caused by withdrawing this paper circulation; but that it would be the wish, as well as the duty, of the Bank of England to provide; and thus the danger and difficulty apprehended would be avoided. It was not his intention to enter into the question; but he felt it necessary to state, that the vote which he should give in favour of the proposed measure would be in perfect accordance with that which he had given on the former occasion; adding his belief, that without the regulation now proposed, the measure itself would be ineffective. He did not wish to detain the House, but he felt it necessary to make a few observations upon the conduct of the directors of the Bank of England. He would defy any man to show in the history of the commercial world, a more strict personal integrity than was to be found in the conduct of the directors in the whole of their money transactions with the public. He would take, for instance, the period of 1816, when the Bank was deriving enormous profits—how acquired he would not stop to consider—and when they divided the immense sum of 25*l.* per cent upon the capital stock—a circumstance, the previous knowledge of which would have made the fortune of any individual; and yet, on examining the books, not a single director was found to have availed himself of his private knowledge, or to have possessed one shilling more of stock than was necessary to his being constituted a director according to the charter. The whole of the gentlemen who composed the directory of the establishment were men of the highest character and soundest principle; and were every way worthy of the respect and confidence of the country. He would ask, in conclusion, if the Bank were not allowed to make this issue of one and two pound notes, what must be the state of the country, in the event of a return of a crisis so painfully distressing as that which had been recently experienced?

Mr. *Pearse* said, that there was no reasonable ground for apprehension that the Bank of England would unnecessarily issue small notes. The period of the bank restriction had been referred to; but he begged the House to bear in mind, that at that time they issued their notes under no liability. Now the case was different; for they were bound to pay their notes in bullion. While much praise had been bestowed upon the Bank from all sides, charges had also been brought against the directors which were not altogether fair. At one time, it was said, they encouraged the circulation by over-issue; and, at another time, reduced it by undue contraction. In this latter charge, all sides agreed; but, in truth, neither the one charge nor the other was correct. It was only when there was a want of paper, and the bankers would not give discounts, that these issues were made. Truth and justice called upon him to declare, in the face of the House, that the charges brought against the Bank were not founded in fact.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, he presented himself thus early in the debate, because he believed that the House needed only clearly to understand the measure in discussion, and to see that measure in the light in which it was meant to be brought forward, to come without difficulty to a fair, just, and conscientious conclusion. He agreed in the truth of the first observation of the hon. member who had last spoken; but not in the latter point, as to the manner or principle upon which the Bank was accustomed to regulate its issues. But this was a matter of no consequence; because the question was not, whether the Bank should have unlimited power to issue, or should be altogether restrained from issuing a particular description of notes; but whether the latitude given to the Bank, by the present amendment would, such as it was, defeat the original measure. Now, the hon. and learned member who opened the opposition to the amendment said, that no reason had been given by ministers, why that course which had not been proposed by them, or supported on the discussion a week since, should now be presented for the approval of the House? To that observation there were two answers: and the first was, that the measure before the

House was by no means that which had been negatived in the discussion a week since. It was so far like that negatived measure, that it referred to the Bank, and to issues; but, as regarded its spirit and effect, it was of an entirely different character. The original resolution passed on Tuesday, the 14th instant, and to which reference had been made that night, was as follows:—"That all promissory notes payable to bearer on demand, issued by licensed bankers in England, or by the Bank of England, for any sum less than *5l.*, bearing a date previous to the 5th of February, 1826, or which may have been stamped previously to that day, shall and may continue to be issued, re-issued, and circulated, until the 5th of April, 1829, and no longer." This being the original resolution, the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Newton, (Mr. *H.* Gurney), and negatived, was to leave out the words, "or by the Bank of England." But the effect of that omission would have been totally different from the effect of the present amendment. The measure now proposed gave the Bank of England eight months more to issue their small notes, and allowed them to keep those notes in circulation for a period of three years longer: the amendment rejected left the Bank unlimited as to issue, and kept their notes in circulation until the year 1833. During the whole of that debate, it had been argued that it would be a great abuse on the part of the country banks, as well as a great abandonment of their own interests, to withdraw their small notes suddenly from circulation. He had himself, in particular, dwelt upon that point; and had endeavoured to show the country bankers, that their interest, as well as the public convenience, lay in their spreading the withdrawal of these notes over a larger space of time. But the bankers had not taken this advice—his expectations had been disappointed. As had been predicted by the hon. members for Taunton and Wareham, the bankers, in many parts of the country, had taken that course which he had believed, in good faith, as well as in good policy, they would not adopt; and reports were coming in from all quarters, stating that they were acting upon the principle of suddenly and most materially contracting their issues. Now it was the imperative duty of government to consider what would be the effect of this sudden and complete withdrawal of all the one and two pound notes in circulation through the country. On Wednesday, on Thursday, and on Friday last, accounts had been constantly, and still were coming in; and what was felt already, in consequence of these measures, showed sufficiently what the case would be, if the same course was persisted in and permitted to go on. Then it stood quite clear, that there was no remedy for this, unless gold could at once be found (which nobody pretended could be done) in sufficient quantity to fill up the vacuum—no remedy, but that which was proposed by the present measure, namely, to allow the Bank of England to go on issuing one and two pound notes. It was, in a minor degree, a repetition of the same panic which had taken place in December, and to which the Bank one and two pound notes had been applied, and had at once effected a cure. He believed, that practical statesmen would all agree, that in pursuing measures of public good, it was a duty to be as tender as possible of private interests and feeling; and the whole question which could arise was, whether the indulgence here granted to private feeling was so great as to place in danger the success of the public measure. Then, how stood the case? That the danger was not very imminent might be inferred, both from the practice of the Bank in past years, and from the conduct of government. He did not suppose, or expect, that the Bank of England, or any other establishment, would act for the public interest, to the disparagement of its own. He did not look for this from the Bank. It was no part of their charter, and the public had no right to expect it from them. Their real tie to the public was this (and it was always the safest and the surest one), that the interest of the public became collateral with their own. Now, when he looked to the conduct of the Bank immediately after the passing of the bill in 1819, he found that, long before they were compelled by law to withdraw their small notes from circulation, those notes began slowly to be withdrawn, and at length totally disappeared. Then, how was this? He was compelled to believe one of two things, and either was sufficient for his present purpose—either that there was nothing in the circulation of the one and two pound notes very profitable to the Bank, or that, from an opinion that they were injurious to the public welfare, and not very greatly advantageous to

itself, the Bank had elected to withdraw them: because, it was an error to talk of the Bank-issues, and of the Bank-issues of one and two pound notes as the same. The Bank might be greatly advantaged by large general issues; and yet not at all so, or very slightly, by the issue of small notes. While they were compelled to pay in gold, it could not be for the interest of the Bank to multiply that circulation for which gold was most likely to be demanded. And the fact was better than the argument: it appeared clearly that they had not been desirous to do so; for, in the month of December, when the question had arisen what should be done to fill up the vacuum in the circulation which the failure of the country banks, and the absence of confidence, were creating, the Bank of England being still empowered to issue small notes, had, for three years past, had none in circulation. He had actually believed, at that time, that the one and two pound notes of the Bank—the power of issuing them—had been extinguished. It appeared that it had not. They held the power, but had forborne to use it. Then, before honourable members expressed these violent fears, they ought to look back a little to precedent and practice. He did not say that the Bank of England had withdrawn their one and two pound notes purely because that House thought such a course would be beneficial to the country; but this he did say, and upon the facts he challenged contradiction, that it appeared plainly that those notes were not a circulation to which the Bank was favourable. It was perfectly notorious, in addition to this, that, many times within the last three years, the Bank had taken every means in their power to give a metallic circulation to the country. They had sent forth, over and over again, flights of sovereigns; and those sovereigns had returned to them, like the dove of old to the ark, so widely was the earth deluged with paper. There were these facts to argue from—the recall by the Bank of England of their one and two pound notes, when they might have kept them out—the non-issue when they were at liberty to issue them—and their repeated attempts to give the country a metallic circulation. Judging, as human minds must judge, from what they saw of human actions, did it seem likely that the Bank would be now anxious to force an issue of small notes much more than they had been heretofore. It was not his peculiar province to communicate that fact; but the House should know, that the late issue in December of one and two pound notes was not a measure which the Bank had pressed upon the country. The Bank, during that period of distress, had been advised and pressed to issue their one and two pound notes. On being so pressed, they said,—"We have the power, but, after having so long disused it, we are unwilling to make such an issue without the direct sanction of government." His majesty's ministers, being applied to, thought it right, before they gave their answer, to draw up a memorandum of their opinion. They had not supposed such a record would ever be called for, but it had been taken; and the effect of it was this. The effect of the answer to the application of the Bank was—"That if, for the purpose of meeting the temporary wants occasioned by the sudden withdrawal of the country bank notes, the Bank of England was disposed to avail itself of the power which, by law, it had, to issue notes of 1*l.* and 2*l.*, the government had no objection to such an issue, provided it was understood, that the measure was to be strictly temporary; and provided the Bank would take advantage of the present state of the foreign exchanges to increase their treasures so as to provide for the country a more extensive gold circulation." Such were the principles on which his majesty's government consented to, or rather concurred in, the opinion of the Bank, that such an issue would be advisable. These were the limitations with which it was thought necessary for them to accompany their consent, at a moment when they had no more idea that the question would be mooted and discussed in that House, than they had of the occurrence of any event, however apparently remote or unlikely to happen. It was exactly with the same limitations and the same views that the government now concurred in the amendment introduced by his right hon. friend. Their object was, that if, in the first stages of the contraction of the country one and two pound note circulation, a crisis should occur any thing similar to that which had happened in December, the same remedy might be adopted which had been resorted to at that period. He believed it was admitted, by the general concurrence of every practical man in the country, that the issue which was allowed at that time, was justified by the

circumstances, and was found efficient for its purpose. Therefore he thought the legislature ought not to put it out of the power of the Bank by law to adopt the same course upon the recurrence of a similar necessity. An hon. gentleman had said, with all possible fairness, that though he thought the alteration now recommended might endanger the final success of the plan, still he would rather pass the bill with that provision, than not carry it at all. Now, in adopting the measure proposed by his right hon. friend, it did not appear to him that they took out of the way one of the chances which might operate in producing the recurrence of a state of things like that which had happened in December last. Nothing, he thought, was more calculated to make parliament pause and hesitate as to the prudence of the step they were going to take, than the fear of the danger that must arise, if, in a month or three weeks after the measure had gone through this House, the same scene that took place in last December should be renewed, by the sudden contraction of issues, while the Bank had it not in its power to meet the mischief. The mischief to the country in case of the recurrence of such an event would be incalculable; and he was quite sure that ministers, who ought to know accurately how matters stood, would be taunted—ay, and justly too—for not providing for such an untoward state of things. For his own part, he would infinitely rather that no necessity existed for such restrictions with regard to the country bankers. He did not mean to blame them for what they had done when the necessity of imposing restrictions became apparent. They had taken a particular view of their own interests, and he was sorry that their duty did not prescribe to them the propriety of a gradual, rather than an immediate contraction of their issues. They had adopted a different course, and had created a crisis, to prevent the recurrence of which nothing but the amendment of his right hon. friend would be found effectual. No other antidote could repel the mischief. But, after this amendment were agreed to, let the hon. and learned gentleman compare the state of the law as it would be with the law as it now stood, with a view to his own expressed object—that of introducing a pure metallic circulation. Before the present bill was brought in, the law, as it stood, allowed an unlimited issue to the country bankers and the Bank of England for seven years to come. Now, could any reasonable man imagine, that if this bill were unfortunately thrown out, and an accumulation of those notes were suffered to go on for seven years, that at the end of that period, greater difficulties would not be thrown in the way of the ultimate resumption of cash payments, than would be thrown in by the amendment now under consideration? The bill extinguished the circulation of country notes after the year 1829, or at the end of three years, instead of at the end of seven years. Thus, the increase of that species of circulation was effectually prevented; but symptoms had been shewn of the possibility of a crisis by the sudden contraction of the existing circulating medium, which might entail great evils on the country, and, in the period fixed, the most sanguine man could not anticipate that a gold circulation would find its way into the country to supply the deficiency. The amendment, therefore, went to provide for that evil—to supply the vacuum created by the withdrawing of paper, before it could be expected that sufficient gold would arrive; and he declared most solemnly, that he would not recommend it to the House, if he did not in his conscience believe, that instead of impeding the ultimate object, for which the bill was alone good for any thing, it would rather facilitate that object, by taking out of the way an impediment which would be ruinous to that operation; an impediment, which, if it occurred at all, must occur at the most critical and particular moment—the moment when that important operation was about to be carried into effect.

Mr. *Tierney* said, he would endeavour to follow the right hon. gentleman, as nearly as he could, through the course of his observations. If he could be satisfied that the effect of adopting this amendment would be that which the right hon. gentleman had stated, he for one would certainly agree to it. But it was because he was of opinion, that no such effect would follow its adoption—it was because he was convinced that, in 1829, the legislature and the country would be placed in just the same difficulty as they had now to contend with, that he felt himself obliged to oppose the proposition. It appeared to him very strange, that gentlemen who had opposed the principle of the bill, without this new clause, was now

ready to support the principle of the bill with it. He asked how it happened that the hon. member for Newton who opposed the bill, as highly dangerous in principle, when unaccompanied by this amendment, now approved of it? For, let it be borne in mind, that the discussion hitherto related only to the principle of the bill. How did it happen, he asked, that the previous opposition was entirely done away, when the original intention of ministers was removed, and additional power was given to the Bank to issue one and two pound notes to an unlimited extent during an enlarged period? He would ask of gentlemen conversant in business, whether the general impression had not been, that this alteration bore a favourable aspect, with respect to the continuance of a paper currency? He thought it had that appearance. The paper currency was beginning to be at a premium. To use a familiar phrase, things began to look up in the paper department. The proposition of the right hon. gentleman appeared to have produced a most marvellous effect. Gentlemen who had hitherto looked on the measure with abhorrence, now began to consider it as something exceedingly good indeed. The right hon. gentleman had stated, in more moderate terms than he himself should have used, what he feared was too true, that there was a determination, on the part of country bankers to throw impediments in the way of a return to gold circulation. The country bankers, like good soldiers, appeared to obey the word of their commander very promptly. When they found how matters were going on, they cried out to their leaders—"If we are to mutiny, we are quite ready!" And they had acted, it seemed, upon this understanding; for no man could deny, that the whole of this new proceeding was an admission, that the steps taken by the country bankers to stop the country circulation formed the ground, and the sole ground for this measure. His complaint, then, against the government, without meaning to express any thing like hostility, was, that they had not had courage and firmness to face this threatened danger. If they had possessed that degree of resolution, and had dared to front the country bankers, he would venture to say, that in one week, they would have struck their colours, and come in. Looking to the quantity of gold in the country, they could not have persisted in hiding it; they could not have continued to keep it out of circulation at a loss to themselves. Notwithstanding all that had been said to the contrary, he must, with due deference, deny the assertion. Common sense would not allow him to believe it. The right hon. gentleman said, it would be impossible to procure a metallic circulation, in the room of the gap created by the removal of the country notes. [Mr. Canning—"Not on the instant."] Why, yes, it could not be effected on the instant, because the banks were all in a state of rebellion. But there was a general understanding, that a metallic circulation would be the substitute for the country bank notes; or, as ministers expressed it, that a wholesome circulation would be gradually introduced. Now, he believed that this was wholly impossible, with reference to the measure which they were pursuing. He knew it was difficult to speak of the Bank of England without appearing to attack that body. A great number of them, whom he had known for many years, he highly respected. In their individual capacities, he had no doubt they were men of the strictest integrity; but he had already often declared, and he now declared again, that, as a body, he would not trust the Bank of England a single step out of his sight. They were utterly unworthy of confidence, and he sincerely believed they had caused all the difficulties the country now experienced. And why did he believe so? Because he was convinced that the incautious manner in which they had proceeded with their discounts added greatly to the speculating disposition which had been so prevalent. Oh, but then it was said, "See how handsomely they came forward afterwards to check the mischief." So they did. They issued about 8,000,000*l.* of their own paper in the course of a few days. This was said to have given very great relief to those who were in danger. Yes; but let it not be forgotten, that they were merchants—that they were consequently in danger themselves—and that they had a right, for their own sakes, to smooth and soften down things in the commercial world as much as they possibly could. Hence the secret of their extraordinary liberality. So much had they imposed upon people in general upon this subject, that an hon. friend of his (Mr. Grenfell), not remarkable for his partiality for the directors, had actually stepped out of his

way to move a vote of thanks to them for their disinterested liberality. Nothing could be more preposterous than for the directors to claim credit upon this score. It was like a man claiming a reward from the humane society for saving a boy from drowning, and being met by the declaration—"but it was you that first pushed him into the water." Now this was pretty much the case with the Bank. In every official paper which had been published since the stopping of cash payments, and the introduction of restrictions, the Bank had endeavoured to show that they were adverse to those measures—that they had no more to do with those restrictions than any indifferent gentleman in that House. They said, "It is all the fault of the government. We do not wish to stop payment. It is the act of ministers, and on them we throw it." But, notwithstanding all this, it appeared from the inquiries before the bullion committee, that no set of men ever showed a greater disposition to issue a one pound note, and keep a guinea out of the way.—He did not think with the right hon. gentleman, that the present plan would effect the alteration which he expected, in the course of three years; and he would state his reasons for that opinion. The right hon. gentleman had observed, that there would be a considerable gap in the country circulation, which would be filled up by the paper of the Bank of England. Now, had the right hon. gentleman any reason to believe that the country bankers would alter the course of their dealings in the time specified, and come to their senses as usual? [Mr. Canning said, "I have."] Then, he was satisfied of this fact, that if ministers stood out for a few months, the country bankers—if the mere threat of government would bring them to their senses—would, if left to themselves, have come to their senses without further interference. "But, supposing the measure did no good, after all it can do no harm," said the right hon. gentleman opposite. It was very true, that a gradual reduction of paper currency was wanted, and he was indifferent whether it took place in two or three years; but he thought the time might have been shorter. Only let the House look at the situation in which the country might be, and probably would be, placed, in consequence of this measure. How happened it, in 1822, that a bill passed, enabling the country bankers to renew their issues of notes? This was called for because there was a great reduction in prices. Suppose, at the end of three years, the same thing happened which had occurred before—suppose prices were again reduced—what was parliament then to do? If the Bank filled up the gap, what became of the principle of the bill? The original principle [illegible] that when the small notes were withd[illegible] the gap should be occupied by a metallic currency. The system now proposed would probably go on for the whole of the first year. Ministers said, that the change which they contemplated would be too suddenly effected if only two years were taken for the purpose; but yet the operation of this measure was to force that change. Well, suppose the system was carried on through the second year, and a large number of notes was kept in circulation—what, under such circumstances, could ministers do, if the country bankers stood out, six months before the stipulated period had expired, and demanded more time? How could they answer that body if they came with this appeal—"Surely you will not ruin us all, when you can prevent it by merely extending the term to four years." In his mind, there was the greatest probability that this would be the case. As to the Bank having a small amount of these notes in circulation, he did not much mind that circumstance. At this moment the amount might be but small. Possibly only 500*l*. But, what would this measure do? It would allow them to issue old paper, of any date, or new paper, for the next nine months. What was the meaning of this? It was merely leaving with the Bank the discretion of issuing as many notes as they pleased; and he had no doubt whatever, that every note so issued would exclude a pound sterling from the circulation of the country. Therefore he would contend, that at the end of three years the legislature and the ministers would be placed in the same situation as that in which they stood at the present moment; only that they would not have the opportunity of acting under circumstances less favourable; because it was impossible to understand how, at the end of the specified time, the country could be in a better posture for improving and correcting its circulation, or acting on the principles advocated by his majesty's government, than it was at the present moment. Gold it was impossible to keep out of the country. There was now no need of any

dexterity to keep it here. It flowed in rapidly. The exchanges were in our favour; we were at peace with all abroad; and there never was a time when the public tranquillity was placed on a firmer foundation. Every thing was in favour of making the contemplated alteration now. Why, then, should the change be postponed for so long a period? On a former occasion, the Bank had been asked, whether they had any suggestion to offer, or any objection to make, as to their resumption of gold issues in the course of three years? and that body had answered, that they did not know what might occur even in one year. At that time, the tone of the Bank betrayed a good deal of irritation at every step that was taken. They declared, at last, that they only submitted, because they wished to conciliate the good-will of the government and the parliament; "and," said they, "let them take the consequences." So, he was certain, it would be again. If he could satisfy himself that the passing of this bill would be "the be-all and the end-all," of the paper system, and that at the end of three years a wholesome metallic circulation would be introduced, he would give the right hon. gentleman's measure no further opposition. But, being perfectly satisfied, from all he had heard and seen, that this was not likely to be the case, being deeply and conscientiously convinced, that evil would result from the measure which the chancellor of the Exchequer proposed, he felt himself called on to give it his opposition. He assured the right hon. gentleman, that he would rather support than oppose the measure, if he could do so upon an honest conviction; and he gave him and his coadjutors credit for intending in their hearts to do good. He lamented only that they did not possess more courage and firmness; that they shrunk from a temporary storm, which, perhaps, might have passed over even in ten days from the moment in which he was speaking. They saw the fluctuations which had occurred even that very day, merely from passing circumstances. Ministers seemed determined, by the course they were pursuing, to avoid some risk, certainly a very little one, while, on the other hand, they were incurring a much greater. They were giving a vast encouragement to the country bankers. That body knew they had nothing to do, when it suited their convenience or interest, but to withdraw a certain number of notes from circulation, to create, by that means, difficulty throughout the country, and deter ministers from acting efficiently. If they saw that ministers could not stand the pelting of such a storm as the present, they would laugh at the government, and at all the plans which the right hon. gentleman might think proper to bring forward. He would press the subject no further, because he was afraid that he might say something which he felt no desire to utter. He should, therefore, content himself with having stated the grounds of his objection, and on those grounds he was ready to stand.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, it was well known that many parts of the country were at that time in a state of starvation, for the want of some sort of currency. In Yorkshire they were in such distress that the manufacturers could not pay their men, except by orders on the butcher and the baker. This was a growing evil, which called loudly for correction. If the country bankers were such a dangerous set of men, it was the more necessary that the people should have the security afforded by the amendment. No doubt, a circulating medium of small notes was, at present, necessary for the country; and if country bankers withdrew their paper earlier than the date prescribed, so much the better.

Mr. *Grenfell* wished, as the right hon. gentleman had alluded to the eulogium which he had passed on the conduct of the Bank to say a word in explanation. He never entertained any sentiments with respect to the transactions of the Bank which he did not at present feel. With respect to the immediate point in question, it happened that a meeting of the Bank proprietors had been called, and the conduct which the directors had pursued in the latter end of December—conduct which tended to restore public confidence—was noticed as worthy of approbation. He, in consequence, moved a vote of thanks to that body, with this limitation—"that those thanks were voted with reference to the conduct of the Bank in the late crisis of difficulty and danger to the mercantile world." This acknowledgment he thought they merited.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that, although he felt that the arguments of his right hon. friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had exhausted the subject, still he thought it right to state the grounds on which he was induced to give his support to the amendment. He must,

in the first place, point out the fallacy into which the hon. and learned member for Calne had fallen. The hon. and learned member had reproached ministers for at once granting an extension of power to the Bank of England, when they had refused the hon. member for Midhurst the delay of a month to take the point into consideration. Now, he thought the hon. and learned gentleman must, in fairness, admit the justice of the reason which induced ministers to refuse that delay. They refused to postpone the business for a month, because they knew, that if they granted the delay called for, the evil would not be confined to that one month, but the inevitable inference would be, that government had changed its views, and were prepared to abandon the measure altogether. This was the reason why the application of the hon. member for Midhurst was not acceded to. The right hon. gentleman opposite said, that the whole discussion had hitherto turned on the principle of the measure; but he had heard it stated by another hon. member, that the whole question turned upon time. Here were two contradictory propositions, neither of which he thought was well-founded. In his opinion, the whole of the measure could not be viewed with reference to time, for many of those who opposed the motion on principle, did not concur in the propriety of the time. The right hon. gentleman had spoken of a mutiny among the country bankers, and had called upon government to resist it with measures of vigour. No doubt, in cases of mutiny, it was unwise to concede; but country bankers, by law, were at liberty to take their own course, and it would have been a gross misapplication of the functions of government, to treat them with the summary decision that ought to be applied to mutineers. It was the wiser course for the administration of a great country, not to push its principles to the destruction of any important interests, from a pertinacious objection to concede. It was not for any government to say that it would persist, without deviation, to the right or the left, any more than it would be wise in the pilot of a ship, through a rocky streight, to declare that he would steer through the danger without changing the direction of the rudder. The circumstances which the measures of government were intended to meet, were perfectly novel; and that man must, indeed, be peculiarly gifted, and free from human fallibility, who could propose a plan from which he would not, and need not, consent to the slightest deviation. If the country bankers had pursued a course contrary to their true interests—if they were in a state mutiny, and had produced a great distress—it was wise in ministers t vide a speedy and effectual remedy remedy was contained in the bill u the table; and, with regard to the claus now proposed, he only consented to it in the clear understanding, on the part of the Bank, that it was to be acted upon in the spirit in which it was proposed. When the right hon. gentleman alluded to the year 1819, and stated that the Bank then showed no disposition to withdraw their note circulation, he ought to have remembered, that the circumstances then and at present were entirely different. When the present measure was first proposed, it occurred to him and to others, that it would be desirable not to prevent the Bank, by law, from issuing these notes. There being 700 or 800 banks in the country, the paper circulation of which it was proposed to contract, he felt that peculiar circumstances might occur which would render it necessary that the Bank of England should be allowed to issue those notes, to prevent local pressure and distress. Therefore it was, that he approved of the amendment of his right hon. friend. The conduct of the Bank in 1822 formed a fair ground of presumption, as his right hon. friend had stated, that that body would not wantonly abuse the power which it was now proposed to intrust to them. If they did abuse it, they alone would not be responsible. The responsibility would attach as well to the government as to the Bank. He, for one, would not agree to the measure, if he did not feel the strongest conviction that the principle would be fairly carried into execution. The great object of all parties was to obtain a wholesome currency, and that object would be facilitated by the bill as amended. There lurked behind his assent to it, no expectation or apprehension that the prophecies of those who only foresaw dangers and difficulties would be realized.

Mr. *Ellice* defended himself from the charge of inconsistency. His real fault was only this—that he had yielded, in an abstract opinion, to the pressure of circumstances. The question of free trade would soon come before the House, and

he did not doubt but he could then show, that the subsistence of thousands upon thousands depended upon it. The right hon. Home Secretary had said, that not only the Bank but the government would be answerable for the abuse of the power to be granted by this clause. In what way answerable, he should be glad to know? He had heard of no appointment of commissioners to regulate the issue of paper. That would in reality have been one way of dividing the responsibility with the Bank. In his opinion, after the passing of this bill, not a sovereign could remain in circulation. Every demand on the country bankers would be met by payment in one pound notes of the Bank of England. Let this bill once pass, and it would be to give the Bank a power which experience had shown could not be held by any set of men without the certainty of seeing it abused. He contended that, if there must be a mixed currency, the country bank notes were infinitely to be preferred. They were not subject to depreciation from forgery, and the poor man was not less likely to suffer from them than from the notes of the Bank of England. Suppose a poor man took a Bank of England note at York, he might have to travel to London before he could change it. This was one great evil which he was anxious to get rid of. He admitted the claims of the Bank to the gratitude of the country, for not going beyond the limits prescribed by law for their circulation. But what benefit had the country derived from all the measures hitherto adopted to restore a metallic currency, if this clause should be carried? He agreed with the right hon. Home Secretary, that the government was not, in their fondness for a particular plan, to pursue it contrary to the interests of the community. The sentiment was a good one, but no case had been made out. He had heard, indeed, that the country bankers had narrowed their issues; but what reason was there that the place of their notes could not be filled with gold? The scarcity of gold might justify the amendment; but he had heard no ground stated for such an opinion. The bill, in its present state, was a virtual repeal of the right hon. gentleman's bill of 1819. It gave a power to the Bank—a temptation to increase its issues, which, with the best intentions, that body would not be always able to withstand.

Mr. *Irving* said, that there was nothing in the circulation of the Bank of England notes to prevent a return to a metallic standard, because experience proved, that those notes would circulate in company with the gold coin, without displacing it; whereas, the inevitable tendency of the country notes was to cause the coin to be withdrawn from circulation. He was, therefore, much more reconciled to the bill with the amendment, than he should have been without it.

Mr. *Baring* assured the committee that it was not his intention to take up more than a few minutes of their time. Whatever difficulty other gentlemen might have to prove the consistency and to justify the inconsistency of their opinions upon this subject, he could have no difficulty in proving that he was perfectly consistent in now supporting the measure with the clause, though he had opposed the measure without the clause. He begged leave to remind them, what the position was which he had taken on the former discussion. He did not condemn the principle of that measure. On the contrary, no gentleman could be more fully convinced than he was, that the circulation of small notes was a perfect nuisance; and that with that evil present there could be no dependence on a return to a metallic currency. But his doubt was, that they could not, as he then expressed himself, come at their purpose by a direct course, "as the crow flies." Gentlemen talked of two years as an improbable period for attaining that object. The fact was, that two years would be more than enough time, if they could go on progressively throughout each of the four-and-twenty-months. But experience proved, that the moment they cried down any portion of the circulation, it went too fast. His complaint was, that the speeches and papers of ministers had acted like the cry of "mad dog" on the country notes, and that not only had the bankers themselves hastily drawn in their circulation through fear of being run down, but the whole country, as if nauseating that currency which before was found so useful, threw it upon the banks in overwhelming quantities. He admitted that it was a desirable object to return to a metallic currency. But, they seemed to wish to pass from a state of over-abundant circulation to the most straitened limits of it, not considering, that the very excess of paper, which was alleged to exist, the great extent to which schemes and

projects upon the resources of the country had attained, made it so much the more dangerous to attempt a return to a state of currency totally opposite in its nature. He had said, in corroboration of this, that people who a month before had not known what to do with their money then, did not now know how to raise enough to pay current demands. He praised the able, candid, and clear statement given by the chancellor of the Exchequer. Undoubtedly he considered this clause as a great mitigation of the measure itself; still he contended that they were going too fast. He remained in the conviction, that if they had precipitately passed that bill they would have set the whole of the concerns of the country fast. He felt quite sure that the power left with the Bank of England would not be abused. They could have no more certain proof of that than in the conduct of the Bank in withdrawing their one and two pound notes from circulation. Let no gentleman suppose that he wished to pass a panegyric on that body. On the contrary, he thought that their conduct during the last twelve months had utterly put it out of his power to offer them any panegyric. He had already expressed his sense of their conduct during that period, declaring that, to his mind, there could be nothing more fickle, though he attributed to them, at the same time, the most honest intentions. He agreed with his hon. friend, the member for Midhurst, that the country banker now would have less interest in circulating his own notes, because he must realize the means to get at the Bank of England note as well as the sovereign. At present, the country banker had a direct interest in endeavouring to keep the sovereign out of circulation. He could readily suppose that there would be no great affection felt towards the town-made note; and, as the note would be as costly to the country banker as the gold, the effect would be to preserve gold in much larger quantities in circulation. He would repeat his opinion, that, although favourable to the bill in principle, yet, though he still thought the House was going too fast with the measure; as undoubtedly much of the injury anticipated from it in its original state would be prevented by the amendment, he would support it.

Sir *John Newport* said, he was anxious to explain to the House why, when he had supported the measure originally, he could not support the amendment. He had advocated the measure on a former night, because it tended to restore our currency to a sound state; but that amendment was embarking them in a series of similar measures to which he could see no end. He did not think, under such circumstances, that he [illegible] warranted in giving it his support.

Lord *Folkestone* said, that consi[illegible] required him to vote against the a[illegible]ment. He confessed that, if the bill had been introduced without any modification of the measure as to the time to be allowed to country banks and the Bank of England, he should have felt less objection to it. But, as he saw ministers in the act of yielding, and yielding, too, upon a point which they had declared to be mainly important, he had no hope that they would be able to resist the external pressure of circumstances on another occasion, and really get rid of the one and two pound notes. Their firmness had been tried already upon this very subject. The House was now in a committee on a bill to put an end to one and two pound notes at the end of three years; and only four years ago, from the pressure of circumstances, they were induced to pass that very bill which this was meant to repeal; and now there was a clause proposed which, in effect, wholly prevented that repeal. What reason had they to hope that they could ever arrive at the metallic currency, after so many experiments and failures? He had objected to the small-note bill at the time, because it prevented the country from recurring to that standard; and now the House were rushing upon a measure which was introduced to prevent the repeal of that act from being carried into effect. The right hon. the President of the Board of Trade had stated, that some of the evil of a former period had been caused by collecting gold in order to return to cash payments. At that time the Bank had a great quantity of gold accumulated in its coffers, and the measure of 1822 was for getting it out. But it appeared that the measure of getting gold out of their coffers had had no good effect; for, in five months afterwards, when four millions had been drawn from the Bank, they passed the bill to allow of the circulation of small notes. If difficulties were then great, what must they now be? The experiment, he contended, had been already tried, and he thought the House was only rushing into the difficulties from which they had extricated themselves by

that measure which they were now called on to repeal.

Mr. *Monck* said, that the Bank of England note was the worst for circulation, as it brought with it the dreadful hazards of forgery. The parliament and the public were anxious to return to a metallic currency, and the scarcity of gold was the alleged difficulty. If gold was so scarce, silver was not. What objection could there be to leaving it to the bankers to pay in either as it suited them? That there were too many notes in circulation, would prove but an awkward confession, and that those who had issued them were not entitled to any confidence from the public. It had been said, that there was something approaching to mutiny among the country bankers. In his opinion, if any thing approaching to mutiny existed, it was among the people who held the notes, and who flocked in with them to demand gold. There had been meetings in Manchester and other places, where the mechanics had resolved not to take one-pound notes of country bankers. He highly approved of the conduct of the country bankers, and could not conscientiously give his support to the amendment.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he could not go to the vote, without stating his opinion with regard to the amendment. With his right hon. friend, the member for Waterford, he had hoped the chancellor of the Exchequer would have enabled him to vote for the clause, as he had lent his support to the bill, and he did not feel the least disposition to give the measure any opposition—calculated, as he thought it was, to promote the restoration of the crippled commerce of this country, and guard it from similar convulsions, by restraining the issue of one and two pound notes, and restoring, at that favourable time, a healthy state of the currency. He had listened attentively to the arguments of the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer, and also to the more cogent statements of the right hon. the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; but, like his right hon. friend, his mind was made up not to vote for the clause; the doing which was quite consistent, in his opinion, with the support he had given to the bill. He considered the clause as founded on principles of an opposite nature from those on which he understood the measure to be framed, and on which he supported it; and, because the clause was opposed in its spirit to the original measure, he opposed it. The arguments in favour of the measure had been brought to a short issue, by the clear and candid statement of the hon. member for Taunton. That hon. member did not object to the principle of the bill, and did not proceed, like the hon. member for Bramber, to oppose the bill, and afterwards support it, because that hon. member thought a paper circulation a benefit, and had no wish to see such a circulation put a stop to: that had not been said by the hon. member for Taunton; but he had agreed with the right hon. gentleman opposite, as to the principle of the bill, and had only objected to it on account of the time, saying that the measure was brought forward too soon; that things should be left to themselves for some longer period; and that the remedy should be postponed for a year. Now, what was his (Mr. Brougham's) answer to that? Why this —that if the Bank were told that, at the end of a year, such a measure would be adopted; if they received a year's notice to prepare for the measure; they would delay their preparations they would not set their houses, or rather their banks, in order, but would go on to the end of the year in the hope that something would turn up, which would call paper again into circulation; that government would once more lend its sanction to the measure, and the country would again have small notes to as great an extent as ever. His argument, which applied to the principle of the bill, applied to the eight months proposed by the new clause. He said, he would not give the Bank of England till the 10th of October, on the same principle that he would not give all the banks twelve months; and he therefore, had, on the same ground, supported the bill and must now oppose the clause. Another argument which had been urged in favour of the clause, in the strongest manner, by the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was the limited state of the circulation at present, and the distress caused by the small notes having been withdrawn. The bankers in the country had confined their issues, and out of that much and wide-spread suffering which they had occasioned, one benefit—one only benefit could arise; and that was that the measure which at other times might have dreadful effects, might now be with safety applied, when four-fifths, or even five sixths of the paper currency was with-

drawn, and gold was coming into circulation; and now, he would say, was the very time for carrying the measure; for, by postponing it, they would only again force out paper, and prevent gold from coming into circulation. That was his argument in favour of the measure; but now he was met by this ill-omened clause —a clause enabling the Bank of England to fill up the void made in the paper circulation, by other paper, so that it would be, at the end of some months, brought back to the same state of little else but paper, in which the currency existed before the distress began. The defence of the clause,—the necessity for it—all that the right hon. gentleman hoped to effect by it, was to fill up the void which had been caused, by what had been described as a combination—using a word, he supposed by an oversight, which was as offensive as any which could be used—of persons who exercised, in his opinion, that most useful profession, a country banker [hear, hear!]. That void, then, which had been caused by this combination, if so it must be called, of the country bankers, was to be filled up, by allowing the Bank of England to issue its notes until the void was filled up that had been occasioned by this recent combination. But, would the Bank of England then stop? When it got this power, might it not go on stamping and signing till it circulated as much as it could desire? It was to fill up the void occasioned by the combination of the last fortnight, that they were called on by this clause to allow other paper to be continued in circulation, which was against the very argument which he had urged in support of the bill. The hon. member for Taunton did not differ with him as to the principle, but they differed as to time; and he had taken up his ground for the defence of the bill on the principle, that there could be no time better than the present; but this ground had been cut from under him, by the last, "the unkindest cut of all;" for it proceeded from the fathers of that measure which he had lent his humble efforts to support. He wished to say a few words in answer to what had been insinuated to be a change between his present opinions and those which he had formerly held. Now, he had always maintained, that it was desirable that paper and gold should exist together, but he had never denied or doubted that they could not exist together. There had been no modification of his opinions. He still thought, that that currency was the best which consisted partly of paper, convertible at pleasure into gold, and partly of gold; but experience had taught him, that a paper mad by law absolutely convertible into go' was not sufficient to keep down the p.. to a proper level, and to ensure th try against a paper circulation fr ning into excess. The private , p.. might become of excessive circulation, although convertible into gold. Although large notes might circulate together with coin, small notes could not. Ten, twenty, fifty, or hundred-pound notes might circulate with one or two sovereign pieces; but, the moment you introduced into the paper circulation one or two pound notes, the one or two sovereign pieces would disappear. They could no more circulate together, than bad sovereigns could circulate with good. The hon. member for Taunton had said, that a difficulty existed in the circulation of country bank notes with coin, and that whilst the Bank of England notes would keep in circulation with the metallic currency, the country bank notes would not. Now, his opinion was, that although there might be greater facility in keeping up a joint circulation between Bank of Englank notes and coin, than between coin and country notes, yet the joint circulation of the latter could not be maintained; for the paper would remain, and the gold would vanish. He had understood, that a certain bill was about to pass elsewhere. It might not be quite regular to advert to the proceedings of the other House of parliament, but he hoped the importance of the subject under their consideration would apologize for any breach of order of which he might be guilty. He had heard that it was intended to introduce a clause into that bill, for the purpose of establishing branch banks, and it was said that the establishment of such banks would be injurious to the interests of the existing country banks; but, he could see nothing in the formation of branch banks to affect the interest of individuals connected with country banking. It was true, that the establishment of branch banks would operate as a restriction on country banks; but it was a restriction which would lead to sound and wholesome effects. The establishment of branch banks would prevent individuals from embarking in the banking business without means or experience to conduct their concerns; and,

in this respect, who could deny that, by the formation of those banks, much good would not be produced? He had heard some persons express alarm on the occasion, and say "Are you aware that you are about to establish most formidable rivals to country bankers by the formation of such banks?" But, he could not perceive the danger which was thus apprehended. Passing over, however, the apprehensions of such persons, he came to that portion of the proposed measure, from which he was obliged to withhold his assent. He alluded to the clause proposed by the right hon. gentleman relative to the extension of time as regarded the Bank of England. The House should look carefully to the probable effect of allowing the Bank of England to be exempted from the operations of the proposed law for the term of eight months. Poor persons who got hold of one-pound Bank of England notes would keep them in their possession in the same way as they would keep the notes of country bankers; but could they turn those notes into cash with the like facility? The attention of government should be particularly directed to this subject. Would each branch bank be prepared to give cash for all Bank of England notes, which might be presented there, or was every branch bank only to be accountable for its own issues? He felt the more anxious on this point, because he understood that in Ireland, where the system of branch banks was at present in operation, the question had been tried, and the result had been, that the branch banks in that country did not pay notes on demand, excepting such as they had respectively issued. Now this was a very great grievance, and one which he hoped would be provided for in the proposed bill. Notes should be made payable, not only at the particular places at which they might be issued, but at every place where branch banks were established. The hardship would be very severe on poor persons who might have to go twenty or perhaps forty miles before they could get cash for their notes. This was a part of the subject to which he again hoped that the framers of the new measures would pay due attention. The way to legislate for such measures was to legislate openly and fearlessly. Now, he could not help fearing, not that the government wished to conceal their views, but that they did not evince sufficient determination in bringing them forward. If they took fright, and suffered their opinion to be swayed by others, while they had to perform a great public trust, then could they never hope to benefit the country or satisfy themselves. He hoped he should not be considered as saying any thing harsh of ministers when he said, that any further departure from the principles proposed to the House, would entail on the government the just odium of the country. Enough, too much, had already been conceded, and he hoped and trusted that no further concessions would be made, as they would only have the effect of exposing the weakness of the government, and of giving encouragement to doubt and alarm.—Before he concluded, he wished to add a few observations on the proposed extension of time in favour of the Bank of England. One of the greatest blessings that would have attended the introduction of the measures, as originally proposed, would have been, that by the withdrawing of the one and two pound notes, the crime of forgery would have been deprived of one of its principal facilities; but who could question, that the moment those notes of the Bank of England again appeared, forgery would ensue, and that we should have to witness the renewal of those scenes of horror from which the feeling mind involuntarily shrunk. He had himself seen, in the course of his professional avocations, no less than thirty persons tried for the crime of forgery at one assizes; and what security would be offered, that those heart-rending scenes would not occur again? It was said, that those notes were not intended to go into general circulation—that they were to be confined to the country bankers; but was it not proposed to issue Bank of England notes, through the medium of branch banks? Who would take upon him to say that the same scenes of horror and distress to which he had before alluded, would not be again revived? In a former stage of the bill, he had given it his support, from a thorough conviction of its tendency to allay the panic produced by a series of disasters, a recurrence of which he hoped the country would never be called upon to witness; but, he must withhold that support from the amendment proposed by the right hon. gentleman opposite.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, it had not been his intention to have troubled the House with any observations of his at so late a period of the debate; nor should he have arisen

at all, were it not that he felt himself called upon to explain something that had fallen from the hon. and learned gentleman who had just sat down. The hon. and learned gentleman seemed to apprehend, that there existed a difference between the Bank of England and other banks, as to the tendency of their issuing notes, and that the Bank of England had not the same interest with the country banks in regulating their issues. It was only on one principle that he had given his concurrence to the proposition. A country bank issued notes for the supply of the district in which it carried on its operations. It wrote to the Bank of England for gold whenever it had occasion for gold to pay its demands. But the Bank of England was obliged to pay all its notes on demand in gold itself. For this reason the Bank of England had not the same motives for over-issues that the country banks had. When the exchanges enabled the Bank to accumulate a quantity of gold, they were anxious to withdraw their notes, and to supply the country and metropolis with gold, and to pay the notes of the country bankers in gold. It being, however, the interest of the country bankers to prevent such a measure, and not that of the Bank of England, he gave his consent to the amendment. It was a fact no longer disputed, that there was a great diminution of country bank notes in circulation since the alarm created. He was ready to agree with the hon. and learned gentleman, that there was already a considerable diminution in the number of one-pound country notes. That diminution would increase; but he, for one, would not wish to see the bank-notes too suddenly withdrawn from circulation. He would not anticipate how rapidly the country bank notes might be withdrawn; neither would he insist, that there was not a disposition to take them out of circulation as speedily as possible, in the minds of some. From what cause such notions were entertained, he would not now inquire, but he was persuaded that a gradual progress to attain the object sought by the measure proposed was the most likely to lead to beneficial results. During the late panic, a vast quantity of gold had been issued from the Bank, which was still in the country, for the state of the exchanges rendered it impolitic to export it. This gold was now in the hands of the country bankers, not to pay off their one-pound notes, but reserved to answer those sudden demands to which they were liable. For himself he could answer, that he never would desire to see more pound notes in circulation than there were when the prohibition by which notes were forbidden to be stamped took effect; but he must say, that we were bound not to be unprepared for an emergency; and who could tell but there might be, at no very remote period, an occasion to call for that aid which it was the duty of government to keep in reserve? The hon. and learned gentleman had asked, was it provided that the Bank of England, in the event of their establishing branch banks, should pay their notes on demand at their respective branches? He had no hesitation in assuring the hon. and learned gentleman, that it was certainly the intention of government, that in those districts where branch banks were to be established, the Bank of England should not be allowed to issue notes, without being liable to be called upon to pay instantly in gold on demand. Indeed, without such a clause, it was quite impossible that a salutary or absolute restraint could be imposed on those who issued the notes. He would go a little further, and call the attention of the House to the difficulties in which the Bank of England were placed, with regard to their large notes. The Bank was obliged to pay not only the small notes, but all the notes above 5*l.*, whenever a demand for gold was made. Now, what was the state of the country banks? They were obliged, of course, to pay the one pound notes; but all those above five pounds were made payable only in London. [Cries of "no, no," from several members.] He understood this to be the case. It certainly had been stated by the member for Staffordshire, and he considered him good authority, that, in many of the counties, the large notes were not payable on demand in those counties but only at the banking-houses of their agents in London. This amounted almost to an absolute refusal to pay, as the inconvenience and risk of sending them to the metropolis was such, that it was seldom carried into effect. Now, if this was the case, was it proper that the country should be left in such a state? It was the duty of government and of the legislature to provide a remedy, and to watch narrowly the conduct of the country bankers, in case an attempt should be made to withdraw all the small notes. If the small notes should be withdrawn, and the country bankers were not obliged

to pay the large notes—if they were to say to the farmer, or tradesman, or mechanic, in case of any run upon them—"We are not obliged to pay you here, you may go to London and receive the amount;" what would be the state of that district? Why, the greatest confusion must follow, if the people were not only without the small notes, but could get no value for those of five pounds and upwards. It was absolutely necessary to provide a substitute to meet the danger, and he could see none so likely to succeed as the one proposed by his right hon. friend. God forbid that he should suppose any of the country bankers would have recourse to such a step, but the safest way certainly was to put such a course of proceeding entirely out of their power. The measure was one that involved a great deal, and it therefore became the duty of parliament to watch its progress, and examine its details. The directors of the Bank of England had no wish to issue one-pound notes. They ought not to put them out. He trusted that they would not; but, at the same time, it was proper that they should have the power, in order to prevent such a crisis as that which had so lately taken place. So long as the exchanges continued favourable, there would be no occasion for their issuing small notes; and, in case of the exchanges turning against this country, the Bank would find it necessary to contract the issue both of their small and large notes, in order to prevent a drain on their treasure. He confidently trusted that this power would not be abused, and he hoped that the House and the nation at large would see the propriety of the measure proposed by his majesty's ministers.

The committee divided: Ayes 187. Noes 24. Majority 163.

List of the Minority.

Abercromby, J.	Monck, J. B.
Althorp, viscount	Newman, J.
Blake, sir F.	Newport, sir J.
Brougham, H.	Nugent, lord
Chamberlayne, H.	Rickford, J.
Davies, colonel	Russell, lord J.
Ellice, Ed.	Russell, lord W.
Hobhouse, J. C.	Tierney, rt. hon. G.
Ingleby, sir W.	Whitmore, W. W.
Johnson, col.	Wood, alderman
Knight, Robert	
Lamb, hon. G.	Teller,
Maberly, J.	Lord Folkestone
Macdonald, J.	

Mr. *Hume* then declared his intention to move the introduction of two clauses into the bill. One giving a summary power to magistrates to compel bankers to pay their notes in cash. Every act of parliament relating to banks, down to the 37th George 3rd, contained a clause to that effect. The other clause would go to compel bankers to deposit in the hands of certain commissioners, funds to the amount of the small notes issued by them. It would, he thought, greatly check over-issues if these commissioners were empowered to convert the stock, so in their custody, into money, for the discharge of the bankers notes, such a measure would produce great confidence. He was likewise anxious that the bankers should be required to pay their notes in the several places where they might be issued. The currency could not be said to be settled on a convenient footing, if persons were obliged to travel up to London to procure cash for their notes.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, that if the clauses proposed by the hon. member for Aberdeen were adopted, they would go to extinguish the small circulation altogether; as no banker, in his sober senses, as things now stood, would under them issue a note.

The bill was reported, and ordered to be taken into further consideration on Thursday.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, February 21.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES—LIABILITY OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON JURIES.] Mr. *Bennett* said, he wished to obtain information from the Speaker to guide him in the situation in which he stood. He had, in pursuance of the orders of the House, to attend a committee to-morrow morning, and he was also summoned as a juror in Westminster-hall. Now, how was it possible for him to obey their orders, and at the same time discharge his duty to his country in the situation of juror? He was at a loss how to proceed under these circumstances, and he threw himself on the Speaker for the benefit of his advice.

The *Speaker* said, the House was aware that this very question had been referred to the consideration of a committee of privileges, which had not yet made their report. The only answer he could give at present to the question

which the hon. member had put to him, was, that he had himself no doubt of the course which he should pursue, were he placed under the circumstances alluded to. His answer would be, that, conceiving his duty in that House was his first obligation, he should perform it—he would not say neglecting every other duty, for that would imply a fault, but—omitting all others which could clash therewith. He understood that the report of the committee of privileges would be presented in the course of the evening.

Mr. *Wynn*, shortly after, reported, from the committee of privileges, to whom the matter of complaint made by a member of the House of his being summoned as a jury-man in the Court of Exchequer, in the case of the King against Steel, was referred, that they had examined the matter of the said complaint, and had come to the following resolutions:

1. "That it appears to your committee to be amongst the most ancient and undoubted privileges of parliament, that no member shall be withdrawn from his attendance on his duty in parliament to attend on any other court.

2. "That this privilege, with respect to service upon juries, has been repeatedly asserted, as will be seen from the three following cases:

"On the 22nd November, 1597, sir Edward Hobby moved the House for privilege for sir John Tracie, being a member of this House, and now presently at the Common Pleas, to be put on a jury. Whereupon the serjeant of this House was presently sent with the mace to call the said sir John Tracie to his attendance in this House; which was thereupon so done accordingly, and the said sir John then returned to this House.

"On the 6th of May, 1607, it was informed that sir Thomas Biggs and sir Thomas Lowe, two members of the House, were by the sheriff returned in the court of King's-bench, jurors upon an attaint between John Macham, tenant to the lord Barkley, and Edward Beard, tenant to the lord viscount Lisle, and it was conceived that in this case, by the privilege of the House, they ought to be spared from their attendance:—Which was ordered accordingly, and Mr. Serjeant commanded to go with his mace and deliver the pleasure of the House to the secondary of the King's-bench, the court then sitting.

"On the 15th of May, 1628, sir William Alford returned of a jury this day in the common place, to have privilege of parliament not to serve; and a letter to be written by Mr. Speaker to the judges, that, he be not amerced for his non appearance.

3. "That this privilege, among others, appears to be expressly reserved by the words of the last clause of the Act 6 Geo. 4, c. 50, for consolidating and amending the laws relative to jurors and juries."

Mr. *Wynn* observed, that as, no doubt, the fines had been imposed in consequence of a misconstruction of the act, he thought the House would sufficiently assert its privileges by agreeing to this report, and proceeding no further in the affair.

Mr. *Hume* wished to know in what manner the decision of the House, on this subject was to be communicated to the learned baron of the Exchequer; for it was well known that printing the proceedings of that House was held to be illegal.

The *Speaker* said, that the hon. member ought to know, that one of the first orders of the session was for the printing the votes of the House, by which its proceedings could be known. There were besides the Journals of the House in which the proceedings were recorded, and which were accessible by the public, in consequence of the permission given to parties to sell them.

Mr. *Holford* thought, that the privileges of members were sufficiently asserted in the report. He would not therefore take any further proceeding.

The report was agreed to, and ordered to be printed.

JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES—MEXICAN MINING COMPANY.] Mr. *Hobhouse* rose to present a petition, in which he requested the attention of the House. It related to a subject to which he had before adverted, and to which, notwithstanding all that had been said, he could not help attributing a great portion of the present distress—he meant Joint-stock Companies. When hon. members considered that every one of the shares in those bubbles which was thrown on the market was a bad piece of currency, they would not be surprised at the extent of the evil. The loss occasioned by the pitch to which these ruinous speculations were carried, if the highest rate of premium and the lowest rate of discount were considered, would, he had no doubt, be found to fall little short of 14,000,000*l*. Some, he believed by far the greater part, of these speculations

were a total loss to the subscribers; and, of those few which were carried into operation, it would be found that very little profits had been shared. One great evil of those speculations was the injury they had done to the hitherto untarnished character of the English merchant. Some of the wildest of the schemes were ushered into the world with the names of the most respectable merchants and traders of London at their head; and he had been assured, by a gentleman well acquainted with these matters, that one cause of the present difficulty of obtaining credit in the city was, that so many had been engaged in those schemes, that persons knew not whm to trust. As this subject was likely to come shortly before the House, the matter having been taken up by the corporation of London, from which a petition would, in a few days, be presented, praying for inquiry into the late speculations, he would not trespass longer than while he briefly stated the object of the petition before them. It was from a person named Bernard Ross, and it complained of the conduct of the directors of the Mexican Mining Company. The petitioner had purchased shares in that company; but, on coming to sign the deed of settlement, he found that it contained clauses which were extremely objectionable, and which he therefore refused to adopt by signing the deed. In consequence of this, the directors decreed that he was no longer a shareholder. The clause to which the petitioner objected was one by which the directors were to be indemnified against any legal proceedings. This, he thought, was a course not warranted by law, the directors having certainly acted illegally in the sale of shares; for it was well known that persons who were not original shareholders, but had become purchasers, had no remedy for a recovery of their money in a court of law. The petitioner stated, that each of the directors had appropriated to himself 200 shares, and that the whole number divided between directors, solicitors, and others connected with the company was 3,600. So that the purchasers to that number would be deprived of a remedy in a court of law, not being original shareholders. The premium at which the shares were sold was said to be 15*l.* per share; so that the whole sum realized by those shares would amount to 54,000*l.* This statement, it was but fair to say, was denied by the gentlemen against whom the petitioner complained, and who stated, that the whole of the allegations against them were greatly exaggerated. He had seen some of the parties complained against on this subject, and they denied that they were culpable in the course they had taken. The whole amount of money received for shares by each director was, they said, pocketed from 1,500*l.* to 1,700*l.*; but even admitting this to be correct, he would contend, that the sale of these shares was not a bonâ fide transaction, and it was to be greatly regretted that highly respectable individuals should have lent themselves thereto. The prayer of the petition was, that a committee might be appointed to inquire into the formation of Joint-stock companies generally, and into that of the Mexican company in particular. When he had, on a former evening, asked the Attorney-general whether he intended to introduce any legal measures for the better protection of the public against the formation of such Joint-stock companies in future, he was sorry to learn that he had no such intention. The learned gentleman had said, that as the law now stood, no additional measure was necessary; for that directors, as well as others, could be punished for fraudulent transactions, if there was sufficient evidence to prove the fact. Notwithstanding this declaration of the learned gentleman, he could not help thinking that some measure was necessary for the more effectual protection of the public, particularly as the Bubble act, which made the foundation of all such companies illegal, and subject to very heavy penalties, had been repealed. Much mischief was likely to occur from the repeal of that act, unless some more effectual measure were introduced. He did hope that the House would institute some inquiry as to who were the authors of many of those ruinous schemes. He begged to call its attention to the course which had been adopted in parliament after the blowing up of the South Sea bubble. A noble lord, then on the opposition side of the House, objected to any address in answer to the speech from the Throne going up, unless it contained some pledge, on the part of the House, that they would inquire, and punish those who were concerned in that scheme; and an amendment to that effect was moved and carried. Certainly, there was this difference between the case of the South Sea bubble and the late speculations—that the former was directly en-

couraged by the ministers of that day. But, though that was not the case with respect to the late Joint-stock companies, still it was, he thought, not less the duty of that House to inquire as to who were their authors. The petitioner, in this case, had mentioned the names of all the parties concerned in this company; but as it would be invidious, at present, to mention those names, he would not repeat them.

Ordered to lie on the table.

BEAR-BAITING AND DOG-FIGHTING BILL.] Mr. *Martin* of Galway, rose, pursuant to notice, to introduce a bill for the more effectual prevention of bear-baiting, dog-fighting, and other cruel sports. It was, he observed, so very unusual to oppose a bill on the motion for its introduction, that he felt it incumbent on him not to take up much of the time of the House. He would therefore reserve himself to answer any arguments by which his application might be opposed. The bill for which he should move had this recommendation to the representatives of the people, that it was generally approved of by their constituents throughout the country. He held in his hand a list of fifty-two petitions, presented from some of the most populous cities and towns of the kingdom, praying that an end might be put to these cruel sports. These disgraceful scenes were carried on in places called pits, and in no places were they more cruel and disgusting than in that called the Patrician-pit in the neighbourhood of that House. It had become the duty of parliament to put an end to these enormities. He would conclude by moving for leave to bring in his bill.

The *Attorney-General* said, that the merits of this case had been so frequently discussed, that he felt it would not be necessary to make any further comments upon it. He would therefore confine himself to stating, that he would oppose the bill. [Cries of "Question, question."]

Mr. *Martin* said, he could hardly persuade himself that a case which had come to the House recommended by the inhabitants of fifty-two respectable places would have been met by cries of "question, question." The hon. members who raised those cries could not, surely, be aware of so many petitions being before them on the subject, otherwise they would not have thought it decent to limit the expression of their opinions to that brief negative. He could assure the learned gentleman that he would not recommend himself to that body whom he wished to represent, by opposing the present motion; for there was no Christian minister who would countenance those brutal exhibitions. Both the clergy of the Protestant church, and the dissenting ministers, were unanimous in their wish to have them put down. There was also a petition in progress, of gentlemen who were going about knocking at the doors of all the inhabitants in Westminster, and ninety-nine persons out of every hundred were desirous of signing it. There were also fifty-two petitions from Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, and Hull; in short, from all the great ports and large manufacturing towns in the kingdom, praying for the adoption of this measure. He would supplicate the Attorney-general, if it were only out of respect for the learned body whom he wished to have for his constituents, to assign the reasons for his opposition to this motion. He had received some affidavits from Oxfordshire, which gave a heart-rending account of a most horrible act of atrocity recently committed at a bull-bait near Oxford. After the bull had been torn and mangled by the dogs, a wretch who was a disgrace to the name of man, thrust some sharp instrument into the mouth of the suffering animal, and cut out its tongue by the roots, and having placed it on a plate, carried it round amongst the assembled multitude soliciting a collection. He could mention a hundred instances of similar acts of cruelty, of which he had been informed on most undoubted authority. A fellow matched his dog to fight with one of a much heavier weight, and after it had won he again matched it against another dog much larger than itself. In this second engagement it was vanquished, upon which its brutal owner chopped off its fore legs with a bill-knife, and having dug a hole in the ground deposited it therein. If the Attorney-general thought it for the good of the country that atrocities of this kind should daily take place, he hoped he would state so to the House. He would give another reason in support of his motion. There was not a magistrate in London, Westminster, or the adjacent counties, who was not desirous that these disgraceful practices should be put down. It was a matter of great concern to them that they had not been able to suppress the brutal

contests and exhibitions which were continually taking place at the Patrician-pit in Westminster. In short, he would defy any hon. gentleman to deny that the whole body of the English nation were not against these sports. He trusted, therefore, that the House would not meet the motion with a mere negative.

Mr. *William Smith* said, he should think himself unworthy of a seat in that House if he was deterred by the apprehension of ridicule, from giving his opinion upon a question in which the morals and happiness of the country were much involved. He thought the country much indebted to the hon. member, for exposing himself in bringing forward this measure, to that species of treatment which was very unworthy on the part of those by whom it was practised. Hon. gentlemen must oppose the bill upon one of three grounds. Perhaps they did not believe the stories which the hon. gentleman told. For his own part, he did believe them, because they were published in the newspapers from time to time, and nobody contradicted them. Perhaps they thought the present laws sufficient to put down these sports. If they were, why were they not enforced? If they thought it was of any advantage to the country that these sports should take place, let them say so, and he should then know better how to answer their arguments. He thought there was a great misunderstanding about these matters. Gentlemen apprehended that they rose above vulgar prejudices and were great philosophers, because they considered the lower class of people entitled to their own amusements. Such an opinion, so far from being philosophic or philanthropic, was founded on an unworthy motive. He thought it arose, though gentlemen were not aware of it, rather from a contempt for the lower class of people. It was as much as to say, "poor creatures, let them alone; they have few amusements, let them enjoy them." It was similar to the language which, for a long period of time, was common in the colonies—"As long as they work that is all we want, let them seek their own amusements; what signifies it troubling them about morals; we don't care about these, let them take their own way." He thought these sentiments did no honour to the parties who entertained them. Let those who wished the people to be nothing more than hewers of wood, and drawers of water, entertain such sentiments; but, if they wished to make them rational beings, let them not educate them with one hand, and with the other turn them loose to sports like these.

Colonel *Wood* said, he certainly thought, last session, that the House had gone far enough in legislating upon this subject; but, in the course of the last summer, a most brutal, cowardly, and atrocious scene was permitted to take place at Warwick. He alluded to the lion fight. Every gentleman who had read an account of that disgraceful scene must be of opinion that the laws were deficient; for he was quite sure that, if the magistrates had felt they had power to put a stop to it, they would have interfered. That scene was a disgrace to human nature; and some law ought to have sufficient force to prevent a similar occurrence. The noble animal which had been so tormented was more worthy of protection than its brutal owner.

Sir *Robert Wilson* wished to know whether such horrible crimes could not be punished by the existing law, without an expensive process, which rendered the punishment extremely difficult.

Mr. *R. Colborne* said, he was one of those who did not like this system of legislating. If these sports were to be put down, there were sports of the higher classes which should be put down also. It was rather curious that, when the hon. member for Galway got leave to bring in a bill of this nature, he always contrived to have it passed through its stages at one or two in the morning. He would allow that one bill which the hon. member had brought in was of a beneficial nature. He gave him full credit for that bill, inasmuch as it was of his own production, and he stayed in town to put it in execution; but that bill would become a dead letter if it was not for the active interference of the hon. member; and so would all bills framed in this spirit of legislation. It was often seen that where there were public laws to avenge, there was not much private interference to protect, and the animals were worse off than before. He wished the hon. member would withdraw his bill, in order to revise it, and include in its operation some of the sports of the higher orders.

Sir *John Brydges* said, he was not disposed to treat a subject of this importance with levity. Having witnessed the good effects of a former bill of his hon. friend, he could not but vote for this measure.

It was said, that this was a contraction of the pleasures of the poor. Now, he contended that those who enjoyed pleasure from these sports rendered themselves worse than brutes. Allusion had been made to the University of Cambridge. If he knew any thing of the sentiments of that learned body, and had the opportunity of seeing them assembled to morrow in the Senate-house, he should find them unanimous, or nearly so, in support of this measure.

Mr. *Martin* said, that the fact of tearing out the tongue of the bull was authenticated to him by the clergyman of the parish where the occurrence took place. The hon. member for Oxfordshire could confirm what he said.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, he could not approve of those personal appeals which the hon. member for Galway thought proper to make to his hon. and learned friend; and, as to the insinuations that his hon. and learned friend would injure himself in the estimation of those whose suffrages he was about to court, he could only say, that if his hon. and learned friend stood up, as he always had done, in a fair and manly way, to avow his princiciples, and if, when a proposition was submitted to the House, which appeared to him to originate in a mistaken notion of humanity, he expressed his disapprobation of such measure, there was little danger that he would lower himself in the estimation of those whose support he should solicit. He felt the more anxious to express his disapprobation of the way in which his hon. and learned friend had been treated, because he entertained the same opinion with him upon this bill. If this measure were now for the first time submitted to the consideration of the House, he should perhaps have thought it expedient to entertain it. But it was by no means a novel question. It had been discussed six or seven times in former sessions, and the House was now as competent as it would be at any future time to come to a sound conclusion upon it. God forbid that he should treat with levity the instances of atrocious cruelty which had been detailed by the hon. member. Nothing could be more disgraceful than levity upon such an occasion. He abominated those deeds of disgusting cruelty as much as any man could do. But the question was, whether or not, upon individual cases of abuse, the House was prepared to make an enactment of general application. Where was legislation to stop, if one gentleman wished to protect lions, another to protect dogs, and both would have an act declaring lion and dog fights illegal? There was scarcely an animal that was capable of being ill-treated in favour of which an act of parliament would not at last be sought. Let these hon. gentlemen state some positive principle upon which they would correct such abuses, and which would apply equally to all cases of cruelty. Let them take, for instance, pigeon-shooting. Why was that practice to be permitted to one man, whilst another was punishable for doing what amounted to the same thing in principle? If abusing a dog for sport was punishable when practised by the lower orders, there was no reason whatever why pigeon-shooting should be allowed to the higher orders. Let then the House, before it went farther, determine upon the principle on which it was disposed to legislate. To say that selecting a fine thriving pigeon, setting it in a trap to be shot at at twenty yards distance, when in all probability it will be either killed or maimed; to do all this in cold blood, and to say that such wanton cruelty was a perfectly innocent pastime, whilst dog-fighting and bull-baiting were held infamous and punishable, because practised by the lower orders of the people—was a course of legislation to which he for one would never consent. Such were the reasons which induced him to disapprove of the present bill. He owned he was swayed very much by another consideration. He feared, though he was very anxious to suppress abuses, that the means of doing so might in itself be a source of new abuse. He doubted very much whether we could purchase the due punishment of such outrages, except at the risk of creating fresh instruments of individual oppression. He feared the result would be, that animals would not be protected, but that human beings, from piques or wantonness, would be prosecuted. He opposed the motion, not because he less abominated the cruelties recounted by the hon. member, but because he considered that appeals to the feelings did not constitute a sound basis for legislation. The measure was partial in its objects, and inexpedient in its principles; and he therefore should oppose it.

The House divided; for the motion 37; against it 76; majority against the motion 39.

CATTLE ILL-TREATMENT BILL.] Mr. *Martin*, of Galway, next rose to move for leave to bring in a bill to amend the 3rd George 4th, c. 71, entitled "An Act to prevent the cruel and improper Treatment of Cattle." The hon. gentleman said, that he wished to extend the protection which was granted by former measures to cattle, to all domesticated animals. Why was not a dog entitled to the same protection as a horse? He was prepared to show, by affidavits, that there were numerous instances of dogs being flayed alive. It had been asked, were they to legislate upon individual instances of monstrous cruelty? He would reply by stating a case which had been mentioned to him by Mr. Halls, the magistrate of Bow-street. That gentleman had informed him, that he had seen a parcel of wretches take a dog, flay him alive, taking the skin completely off, put a collar about his neck, and after dragging him a mile, throw him into a river. Mr. Halls added, that, so much were his feelings wrought upon by this exhibition, that he did what was certainly a violation of the law, but was highly to the credit of his humanity—he took the boy who was holding the collar, and flung him into the river after the dog. He (Mr. M.) stated nothing now but what he gave chapter and verse for. As to the fact which he had stated relative to the cutting out of the tongue of a bull, and its being severed from the surrounding integuments by a brutal fellow who had thrust his hand into the animal's mouth for the purpose, and lastly, as to the tongue being handed about the crowd in a plate for money, the person who held it, saying, "please to put something on the tongue," he would appeal for the truth of the statement to the hon. member for Oxfordshire, before whom the offenders, he understood, were brought. Could any one, after hearing such a statement, refuse their protection to the unfortunate animal, who was so often subjected to such treatment? He had taken the opinion of his majesty's Attorney-General on the subject, and, he was happy to say, that the opinion of that learned person, beyond all doubt a good one, was decidedly unfavourable to the legality of such proceedings. The Attorney-General conceived that it was as unlawful to hurt a bull in that manner, as it would be to maim or torture any other animal [The Attorney-General here indulged in a smile]. The learned gentleman might laugh, and no doubt he considered him and his case as a fit subject for ridicule, but he could tell him it was not a matter of ridicule elsewhere. It had been observed, both of the bills, which he had carried, and of those which he meant to pass, that he legislated on particular cases. While, however, he admitted he had selected cases of animals tortured through the means of the skin, as those best fitted to convey to the House the nature of the torments which poor dumb creatures were forced to endure, because it was well known that no part of the frame was so sensitive as the skin; still he could produce many other instances of the most horrible tortures inflicted upon every species of domesticated animals, with every refinement upon cruelty. He contended, however, that the proof of one such act was as good as a thousand: what had happened to one dog might, and probably had, happened to hundreds; the business of the legislature was to prevent, not to punish; and, in defiance of the dicta of the late Mr. Windham and all his patrician supporters of the present day, he would maintain that the dog and the bull should be equally protected from the savage ferocity of an ignorant mob; and that the legislature, listening to the unanimous sense of all the character and respectability of the country, should interpose its authority, and guard against the recurrence of such scenes as had been described. His purpose was to alter and amend the former act, as far as regarded domesticated animals; and he would, in addition to the clauses contained in the bill of last year, which had been lost, propose another clause, granting magistrates the power to compensate individuals in a humble station, for the loss they might incur by giving information of the perpetration of the crimes which it was his object to punish or prevent. He hoped the Attorney-general would not consider a fine of three or four pounds, or the imprisonment of a week, a sufficient punishment for such offences as he had described; and that if he held the maiming other people's property a felony, he would not object to making the wanton torture of animals, even if they were a man's own property, a high misdemeanour, somewhat different from the punishment allotted to the over-driving of a horse; and, if he objected to the power being granted to a magistrate of summary conviction, he would at all events allow the case to be fairly tried at the quarter sessions. It

would remedy a defect in sir James Mac-intosh's bill; which made it necessary to prove malice against the owner before a conviction could be obtained against any person who maimed and wounded cattle. As he saw the hon. member for Oxfordshire in his place, he should like to know the reasons which had prevented him from punishing the person who had baited the bull, and maltreated it in the manner he had described. If the hon. member had any doubts as to whether the bull was privileged by his bill, he could tell him that the Attorney-general had given it as his opinion, that it was, and had further added, that bull-baiting was illegal. The hon. member, after some further remarks, concluded by asking leave to bring in the bill.

Mr. *Butterworth*, in seconding the motion, said he considered the suppression of such nuisances as that which this bill was meant to suppress, of minor consideration, compared with those scenes of outrage and brutality which attended the practice of prize-fighting. When men were hardened and brutalized, by habitually witnessing the violence and bloodshed which accompanied prize-fighting, it was impossible they could think of treating inferior animals with tenderness. He regretted that such exhibitions, instead of being denou ncedby the authorities, were in too many instances allowed to proceed, if not directly encouraged. He had reason to believe, that two years ago a prize-fight took place at Warwick, when the magistrates of that county not only declined to interfere to prevent such a scene, but caused constables to attend it for the purpose of preserving order. If this statement were true, nothing could be more disgraceful to those authorities. Such abominable outrages were calculated to brutalize the minds of the mass, and to render them insensible to the quantity of pain which they inflicted on inferior creatures. He trusted the hon. gentleman would turn his attention to the prize-ring, as by suppressing that source of demoralization and depravity, he would be doing more good than he could possibly expect to effect by all his acts against the ill-treatment of cattle.

Mr. *Ashurst* said, that he was not present when the hon. member for Galway had addressed the House on the subject of the bull; but he had been informed that the hon. gentleman had said, that an individual had torn out the tongue of the bull, placed it upon a plate, and had then gone about collecting money upon it. Was that a correct statement of what the hon. member had said?

Mr. *Martin*.—Yes.

Mr. *Ashurst* begged leave to say, that a complaint had been made to him of conduct similar to that which the hon. member stated; but when the parties came before him to substantiate that complaint upon oath, it assumed a very different aspect. It appeared that, during the time the bull was getting baited, a ferocious dog, which had been tied up in a House adjoining to the spot where the baiting took place, escaped from his kennel, attacked the bull, and actually bit off a small portion of its tongue. On the witness who, saw this circumstance, being asked whether the tongue had been cut out, he said, that if it was, he did not see it.

Being further asked, whether he had seen the tongue put upon a plate, and carried round the meeting, he said that he saw no such thing done, and that he did not believe that it had been done. He then asked the witness, whether he could mention any person who had set a dog upon the bull after its mouth had become covered over with a bloody foam. To that question he got no answer upon which he could act officially as a magistrate. The hon member had asked him, whether he conceived bull-baiting to be illegal. For his own part, he must say, that he knew of no law by which bull-baiting had been prohibited; and, as long as he knew that lands were held at Windsor, at Oakingham, and at Stamford, on condition of keeping a bull for baiting, he could not believe that it had been prohibited. Besides, he knew of no case in which it had yet been decided that bull-baiting was illegal. No person who knew him could charge him with being guilty of giving encouragement to the practice; but he did not believe it to be prohibited by any law at present in existence.

Mr. *Martin* said, he had an opinion of the Attorney-general, which he would get published, declaring the illegality of bull-baiting.

The *Attorney General* said, he did not rise to object to the motion of the hon. member. What precise object he sought to attain by the present bill, he could not comprehend from the hon. member's speech; but, if he thought that his former bill wanted amendment, it was only fair that he should have an opportunity of

amending it. In answer to the question which had been put to him, he would reply, that he was of opinion that the offence of bull-baiting was punishable by the existing law. There was no occasion to introduce a bill to render prize-fighting illegal, as it was so already. He conceived that the recent assembly at Warwick to bait a lion was a riotous and illegal assembly, and as such it might have been dispersed by the magistracy. To those persons who did not know him he would say, that he was the last person in the world who would become an advocate for cruelty; and that he opposed these motions, not because he loved cruelty, but because they would not answer the objects which the hon. member for Galway had in view; because they would give rise to numberless petty vexations; and lastly, because he did not know where the House would stop, if it once began to legislate, not with regard to the security of property, but with regard to the feelings of the animal. His hon. friend ought not to introduce his measures in detail, but should introduce them upon some general principle, which could be fairly discussed and decided on by the House. His hon. friend, on each of his motions, brought forward instances of cruelty which he believed to be true, but which generally turned out to be either false or greatly exaggerated; as had been the case that night with regard to the tearing out of the bull's tongue. Nothing could be so unsafe as to legislate upon the statement of one or two individual members, and not upon some great and general principle. He would not object to the bringing in of the bill, but he did not by so doing pledge himself not to oppose it hereafter.

Mr. *Martin*, in reply, stated, that he had a letter from the clergyman in whose parish this bull-baiting had taken place, describing the particulars of it in the terms which he had used.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

Conduct of Mr. Kenrick, in the Case of Franks.] Mr. Denman having moved the order of the day for taking into consideration the Minutes of Evidence taken on the 17th instant,

Mr. *Butterworth* requested to know, whether Mr. Kenrick still held the situation of recorder of Dover, or whether he had been removed from it?

Mr. *Peel* replied, that he did not know whether Mr. Kenrick did or did not hold the office, nor whether he discharged its duties in person or by deputy; but he could answer distinctly, that that gentleman had not been removed from the office by the authority of the government. He thought that the hon. gentleman, who himself represented Dover, was quite as likely as any person to know whether Mr. Kenrick was the recorder of that borough.

Mr. *Denman* said, it was not easy for the member for Dover to know any thing of the recorder of Dover, as there was no such officer. There was a high steward in Dover, the nature of whose duties was similar to that of recorder; but before a person was eligible to that situation, it was necessary that his majesty should express his approbation of it. Now Mr. Kenrick had never been nominated by his majesty.

Counsel were then called in, and Mr. Gurney was heard at the bar in defence of Mr. Kenrick. Mr. Bolland then appeared at the bar, as junior counsel for Mr. Kenrick; and being asked by the Speaker if he wished to urge any thing in behalf of the accused, he declined addressing the House, upon the ground of the full and satisfactory manner in which Mr. Gurney had made his defence. The counsel being ordered to withdraw,

Mr. *Denman* said, he rose at a period when it was permitted him to explain, in detail, the grounds upon which the motion had been made; and he felt that it was peculiarly necessary to do so, because, in the course of the preliminary discussion, misconceptions had been betrayed by hon. members, beyond any thing which he could possibly have conceived or anticipated. He little thought that any one in that House could be ignorant that it was the duty of the two Houses of parliament to watch with jealousy the conduct of the judges; and, in case of their betraying any dereliction of duty in the administration of justice, it was their business to address his majesty to remove them from their situations. In former periods of our history, the commissions of the judges were held by a very different tenure from that by which they were held at present. The office of judge was formerly held by a commission, dependent upon the good pleasure of the Crown. They were sometimes appointed, as their commissions expressed it, during their good behaviour, quamdiu se bene gesserint. Between the reigns of James 1st and the Revolution, the former tenure prevailed, and the judges were not

removable for ill behaviour, but at the sole pleasure of the king. With such a tenure, he need scarcely say, that the most capricious and unjustifiable removals took place, when judges had sufficient virtue and fortitude to perform their duty to the public. Thus, that very conduct which reflected lustre on the bench, was often the source of the displeasure of the Crown; and judges were removed from those seats to which they did the utmost honour. After the Revolution, this nefarious practice was happily put an end to, and the judges' commissions were directed to be made out by the present tenure of quamdiu se bene gesserint. This was permanently enacted by the act of Settlement, but, at the same time, it was expressly declared, that, upon the addresses of both Houses of parliament to the throne, the judges should be removed. In the first year of the reign of his late majesty, that sovereign, being desirous that the judges should hold their offices by a tenure still more independent of the Crown, had addressed the parliament to this effect from the throne, and had provided that the judges should not be removed in the event of the demise of the Crown. But, in the settlement of this question, it was especially provided, that his majesty, his heirs, and successors, should remove any judge upon the address of the Houses of parliament.—All the preliminary attacks upon the present course of proceeding had been, therefore, thrown away; for it was the obvious duty of that House to make such inquiries into the conduct of judges, and to exercise their constitutional privilege of addressing the Crown to remove any judge who should conduct himself in a manner to disgrace his office. This was the tenure of office of the twelve judges of England; and, with reference to the eight judges of Wales, their tenure of office he conceived to be precisely the same. They held their seats by the 34th of Henry 8th which expressly gave them the same power of holding all manner of pleas of the Crown as the English judges; as well as the power of holding all actions and writs as the judges of the Common Pleas. In addition to this, they exercised the same equitable jurisdiction as the lord Chancellor of England. Thus, throughout the whole principality of Wales, every judge of great session held the same power as the judges of the courts of King's-bench and Common Pleas in England, and they also exercised that enlarged and over-ruling equitable jurisdiction in Wales, which the lord Chancellor possesses within the realm of England. This immense power held by the Welch judges furnished the same reason for the House to watch and supervise their conduct with the same degree of jealousy with which they were constitutionally bound to watch the conduct of the English judges; and the manner of appointing individuals to the office of judge, in Wales, by no means made it less necessary for the House to be vigilant in the exercise of their duty. This being the case, he had only to remind the House, that Mr. Kenrick came before them as a judge of great sessions in Wales: he also filled the office of a justice of the peace, or magistrate, for the county of Surry, and he was called by himself, although not quite correctly, recorder of the town of Dover; for he believed his title was not quite complete, although formerly his appointment would have received, without any difficulty, his majesty's approbation. By the act of Settlement, and by the first of his late majesty, the patent of a judge would be repealed, in consequence of any crime proved against him before a jury, as a breach of the tenure by which he held his office, the quamdiu se bene gesserit becoming void on any proof of crime; but, at the same time, the discretion which had belonged to the Crown became vested in parliament. This being the case, he quite agreed with what had been stated upon a former occasion, that the question before the House, and all similar questions, must be questions of degree; and it was entirely for the House to consider, whether the present case was of sufficient magnitude, and whether it brought a sufficient scandal on the administration of justice, to require the interference of parliament. After the animadversions passed upon the character and conduct of the person who filled this high office, and who was now before the House, he thought that to depart from an investigation of the case, upon any of the grounds which had been urged in the preliminary discussion, would be for the House to give up one of its most valuable privileges, and to fly from one of its most important duties. It was incumbent upon the House to decide, whether Mr. Kenrick had not forfeited all right to the good opinion and respectability of society, and he should therefore proceed to animadvert upon the case. It

had been stated, in the speech of the learned counsel at the bar, that the Morning Chronicle had animadverted upon the conduct of Mr. Kenrick, and that the articles in that paper had constituted a most atrocious libel. These supposed libels were published in August, 1824. Between that month of August and the ensuing Michaelmas term, Mr. Kenrick had to consider of his application to be made to the court of King's-bench for a criminal information against the editor of that paper, as the author of the libels in question. Most undoubtedly it was the paramount duty of any man who regarded his character, to have brought forward an application of this sort. It sounded, however, most strangely in the ears of the world, that a judge should have made application to the court of King's-bench for a criminal information, in consequence of libels of this atrocious nature, and that redress should have been refused by the Court [hear, hear!]. He might also here animadvert upon the fact, that the same judge had prosecuted a poor individual for stealing a scrap of wood of the value of less than twelve-pence; and, upon his proceeding to the sessions, the man charged was instantly dismissed, and the costs of the prosecution were refused to the prosecuting judge. These were two very singular situations for a judge to be placed in. It was notorious, that a rule existed in the court of King's-bench, that any person applying to the court for a criminal information against the author of a libel, should distinctly deny upon oath every imputation cast upon his character in the libel. The more atrocious was the libel, the more easy would it be to deny its aspersions. What were the libels that were the ground of this application to the court of King's-bench? They were all printed; and it was essential to the understanding of the case, to compare the libels with Mr. Kenrick's vindication. He (Mr. Denman) entirely dissented from many of the observations which the articles in the Morning Chronicle contained, although there were others that he approved of. But, the alleged libels would be indeed atrocious, if they were untrue; and, for that reason, when he found that Mr. Kenrick had applied for a criminal information against the alleged libeller, he looked very anxiously for the contradiction which his affidavits might contain to the libel. What was the substance of the charge brought against Mr. Kenrick, in the Morning Chronicle? The articles in that paper not only accused Mr. Kenrick of prosecuting unnecessarily and unjustly a poor man of his neighbourhood, but they said, "you have done this because you wanted to get possession of his land." Mr. Kenrick did not deny this, except in one general phrase at the end of the affidavit. In this affidavit, all he said was, "I did not tamper with the wife of Franks, for the purpose of obtaining the freehold." But he did not say, that he did not prosecute the husband for that purpose, though that was the very charge. He did not say that he did not induce the magistrate to send the poor man to gaol, in order to wear him out, and terrify him, and get possession of his freehold. He did not deny this imputation. He did not deny the charge, that he used all means to induce the poor man to plead guilty, that he might get possession of the freehold. He made no such denial. He only denied that he tampered with his wife. It was not denied that he sent Franks to prison—to that miserable gaol, to be corrupted, and contaminated, and ruined, in order that he might fall an easier victim, and give up his freehold. Mr. Kenrick had the opportunity of answering all these charges, and he never denied any of them. So far from it, in another part of the proceedings, he virtually admitted the charges. In his letter to Mr. Collett, which appeared in the Stamford newspaper, he owned his having sent the man to gaol, and he never denied that he wished to obtain his freehold. He said, "About four or five years ago, I offered him, in exchange, another house, which he declined; and, from that time to the time of his coming out of gaol, I had never, directly or indirectly, treated with him, or made any offer, or, in any manner, endeavoured to purchase his cottage; I had bought another, which answered my purpose, and was indifferent about either of those, otherwise than to get rid of a bad neighbour." Thus, he admitted that he wanted to get rid of a bad neighbour; and he tried to effect his purpose by means of this piece of dirty plank [hear, hear!]. Let any man read the libel, and the depositions, and if he could say that he entertained the slightest doubt of the innocence of Franks, he should, indeed, look upon him with wonder. The slab had been lying as worthless in a ditch, and in its dirty state it was found, not in the possession of Franks,

but merely upon his premises. There was not the slightest evidence on the depositions that Franks had ever seen the slab. If Franks had seen it, he had evidently esteemed it a matter of so little value, that he had left it exposed to the view of Kenrick's men, who lived in his neighbourhood. Thus this respectable man, the father of seven or eight children, was committed to gaol upon evidence insufficient to have committed the most dishonest character in the world. It did not require the slightest knowledge of law—it only required the exercise of common sense—to determine, that there was no case against Franks. The learned counsel had said, "God forbid that any undue influence should have been exercised by Mr. Kenrick over the mind of the magistrates who committed Franks!" But it was clear that, when a judge of the land came to swear before a magistrate against a poor man, he did come with a degree of authority that a magistrate might find it difficult to resist. It had been stated by Mr. Burgess, that he had committed Franks to gaol with considerable regret. Mr. Burgess having committed him, he would say, that nothing but the influence of a judge could have induced a magistrate to commit a man upon such a charge. Mr. Kenrick said, "My own carter saw Franks putting this slab upon his premises;" that is to say, it was resting against a rabbit-hutch, where it had been placed by one of the children. Contrast this case with that of Canfor. In reference to that case, he wished that counsel were allowed to address juries in cases of felony. In the case to which he alluded, there was a valuable article found in the possession of the brother of Mr. Kenrick's bailiff, but Mr. Kenrick had refused to inquire into the loss of this valuable sheep, although it had been traced into the possession of the prisoner [hear, hear!]. These two cases ought to be taken together; and, when the House found Mr. Kenrick's conduct so different in the one case, from what it was in the other, it would excite the strongest suspicion that some improper motive did actuate Mr. Kenrick in this most unjust prosecution against Franks. He must be allowed to observe, that the affidavits from which he was quoting were solely the affidavits which Kenrick had produced, in order to obtain his rule for a criminal information. There had been several others filed in answer to these, but it had been argued, that it was unjust to produce them against Kenrick, because he had had no opportunity of answering them, and they were, therefore, ex parte. But, omitting the affidavits that had been filed in answer to Kenrick's, these last themselves became ex parte. Mr. Kenrick had nothing to complain of in the mode of bringing forward this case. It was the most unfounded charge that was ever made, and the House had a right to inquire into the motives. It was the province of common sense to look for some extraordinary motive in the conduct of an individual, so contrary to his duties and station in society, and to his means of information. What was the motive imputed to Mr. Kenrick, in the articles which appeared in the Morning Chronicle? That he had violated his public functions, and had availed himself of his station, in order, unjustly, to dispossess Franks of his freehold. It was not denied that Mr. Kenrick looked to the consequences of his proceedings, and that he calculated they would dispossess Franks of his freehold; but he had stated that his motives were only to get rid of a bad neighbour. It would be well to inquire whether this was the real motive for such extraordinary conduct; and, if this turned out to be a mere pretence, the inference against Mr. Kenrick would be plain. In order to show that this was not his object—that it was a mere pretence, it would only be necessary to refer to Mr. Kenrick's own conduct. Mr. Kenrick, in order to establish that he wished to get rid of Franks, solely because he was a bad character, proceeded to state what the character of Franks was. The character of Franks was highly important in estimating the motives by which Mr. Kenrick was actuated. Mr. Kenrick had felt the necessity of making out something against Franks. It had been stated, that a bloody knife, wrapped in some paper, had been found, belonging to Franks; from which he wished it to be inferred, that Franks had been guilty of stealing a sheep, and of which he had not been even accused and, for which no affidavit had been filed against him. This appeared in Franks's letter to Collett, which appeared in the Stamford News. Collett attributed it to the author, Mr. Kenrick, excepting that Mr. Drakard had made a few alterations to the extent of admitting the direct charge of felony. It was to be observed that these attacks were going on whilst the Morning Chronicle was receiving

small sums of money for Franks, and public compassion was excited in his favour. The insertion of Kenrick's letter in the Stamford News was at this precise time, and had a tendency to check the compassion and bounty of the public. The House had a right to discover these circumstances by a judicial and inquisitorial inquiry. They had a right to expect an explanation from Mr. Kenrick. Mr. Collett might have been called to have produced the letter. Kenrick might have disavowed it when it was shown to him by Mr. James. To-day, the defence was, not that he did not send the letter with an intention of its being published, but that he was goaded to do so by the observations which were daily appearing in the Morning Chronicle. This excuse was not satisfactory to him. When a gentleman was called upon to vindicate his character, if he offered no evidence on the subject, it was quite clear that he had nothing to offer. The letter was evidently intended by Kenrick for publication; for, if Collett could have proved that it was delivered to him only for private information, Kenrick would have required him to have given such evidence. The absence of all evidence on the subject made it quite clear that the letter was written for insertion in that paper. If Kenrick knew any thing of the bloody knife, he ought to have sworn it in his affidavit; for all depended on the character of Franks. So far from swearing any thing against him, he only states, in the letter to Collett, that, "When I first came to my present residence, I found Franks in the employ of persons who were preparing my house for my reception. I received hints of his misconduct which excited my suspicions; and finding them well founded, I dismissed him." This was rather a queer way of dealing with the character of any human being, particularly as he had an opportunity of swearing to any particular fact. He then went on to state one of the most cruel things done by one man to another. He said—"I had, or rather my wife had, sent one of his daughters to school, and she was employed at needle-work, which occasioned her to have access to the house; various articles were missing; lace, stockings, clothes, silver-handled scissors, &c. were missing, belonging principally to the house-keeper, and much jealousy and suspicion was occasioned amongst my servants, till they all agreed on suspecting Franks's daughter, when they acquainted me with the circumstance, and I directed application to a neighbouring justice for a search-warrant, in the execution of which, all the articles were found in a box, in the bed-room of Franks and his wife, under their clothes; the magistrate requested my interference with the parties, on account of the tender age of the girl, to take their things again, and drop any prosecution. This was before the late act, giving a power to prosecute the abettors, had passed." Thus an imputed offence of a child ten years of age was brought forward many years after, when she was a young woman in respectable service, so as to cite her character before the public, injuring her reputation and feelings, merely because she happened to be the daughter of a poor man, against whom a Welch judge happened to make an unfounded accusation. As to the fact of the articles being found under the clothes in Franks's room, the child slept in the room with her parents, and the clothes were found in a deal box in her bed. So far Kenrick's case was disproved; but the most malignant part of the assertion was, that "this was before the late act giving a power to prosecute abettors;" as much as to say, that Franks was an abettor, and would have been prosecuted as such [hear, hear!]. This would have been proved, had it been true, when he moved, upon affidavits, for an information before the court of King's-bench. The inference was, therefore, plain. The House was bound to interfere, when it was so important for Mr. Kenrick to justify what he had stated in his letter to Collett.—Well, next came the statement of the killing of the sheep and, because, forsooth, a bloody knife and a piece of paper were found in a particular spot, the unfortunate Franks was held to be guilty. Would the House for a moment entertain a belief that an individual was to be charged and confined to a prison upon such grounds? Again, it was said that Franks had for ten years been in the habit of nightly depredations in his neighbourhood; but not the slightest proof was brought forward in support of this assertion, and therefore he had, he conceived, an undoubted right to say, that the assertion was unfounded. This had been repeatedly asserted in the Morning Chronicle; and that journal justly set forth, in contradiction to the statement, the very excellent character given

to Franks by the parties called upon his trial. Mr. Kenrick felt this; and, in the criminal information for which he moved against that journal, and the affidavits of the three or four neighbours whom he brought forward, not one word was said about Franks being a man of bad character. If, then, the statement of Franks having been a man of bad character was true; if Mr. Kenrick was right in stating, that Franks had for years been in the habit of committing nightly depredations upon the neighbourhood, why did not that fact appear upon the face of these affidavits? After the evidence which had been given at their bar—after the admissions made upon all hands—he asked any hon. member to put his hand upon his heart, and say whether there was not before him sufficient ground for the course of proceeding which he had felt it his duty to adopt?—But it was said, and it was, he understood, true, that Mr. Kenrick had applied to Mr. Lawson, the clerk of the peace, to withdraw the proceedings against Franks, upon the score of his former good character, although he had, on a former occasion, stated that his character was a bad one. From what had transpired, it was clear that Mr. Kenrick had involved himself in some such dilemma. In Mr. Kenrick's affidavit, he said, that he had written to Mr. Lawson, the clerk of the peace, a letter, of which he kept no copy, stating, to the best of his recollection, how the said John Franks was circumstanced, and praying that the proceedings against him might be withdrawn, upon the ground of his previous good character. If the previous character of Mr. Franks was so good, why was he committed to prison upon such light and inconclusive grounds? Even if the charge of taking a slab of timber of such trifling value were true, why should a man of such character be committed to prison? And, if his character of being a nightly depredator was true, why was he to be protected by the interference either of Mr. Kenrick or the clerk of the peace? Was it consistent with the duty of a magistrate — was it consistent with the character and dignity of a Welch judge —either to oppress an innocent individual in the one case, or screen a guilty one in the other? Nay, more, was it consistent with the character of such an individual to keep back the witnesses necessary to support and prove a charge of felony? If the magistrate had found it necessary to have the daughter taken before a magistrate, upon a charge of having stolen a pair of scissors and a little bit of silk—if he felt it necessary to proceed against Franks himself, under a conviction that he had been a nightly depredator upon the property of his neighbours for the last ten years, why was it found necessary to tamper with public justice, and make efforts to screen a guilty individual from the punishment which he deserved? Why should this magistrate try to screen this nightly thief from the operation of the law, "if it could be done without his forfeiting his recognizances?" Was it not clear that Mr. Kenrick was, throughout, actuated by a wish to rid himself of a person whom he considered a troublesome and inconvenient neighbour, and get possession by some means of his freehold? He would put it in this way—Mr. Kenrick having this object in view, thought he would best accomplish it, first by getting Franks into prison, and then letting him know that he would best relieve himself by pleading guilty to a charge of which he knew himself innocent. By this means his little freehold would become forfeited to the Crown, and being close in Mr. Kenrick's neighbourhood, every man knew how possible it was for a person so desiring, to get possession of it. He maintained, that there was abundant proof of such an intention on the part of Mr. Kenrick. In his letter to the gaoler of the prison in which Franks was confined, he said, "Sir, I shall be obliged to you to inform me in what manner John Franks, committed by Mr. Y. Burgess, for stealing a plank, my property, has conducted himself since he has been in your custody. The facts of the case are so short, and so clear against him, that I cannot suppose he can entertain any hope of acquittal. I have no animosity against him, and if I find he has conducted himself with propriety since he has been in your custody, and his ready to acknowledge his guilt, and is sensible and sorry for his misconduct, I shall be ready to do all in my power to induce the court to be as lenient to him as it can be when convicted, or he shall plead guilty." He (Mr. Denman) was amused when he first read this pompous promise of an effort to mitigate the sentence of the court upon an admission of guilt. It was in substance saying, that if Franks would only confess his culpability, he might escape, perhaps some seven or fourteen years'

transportation. This attempt to extort a confession of guilt was, in his view, without a parallel. He did, then, impute to Mr. Kenrick, when he sought to obtain this confession of guilt from the unhappy Franks, that he had it in his own contemplation to induce him to abandon his freehold. In another place, when the unfortunate prisoner mentioned what was likely to be the conduct of the Benefit Society to which he belonged, in the event of his conviction, Mr. Kenrick said, he would use his efforts to procure the most lenient sentence, upon an avowal of guilt. The offer was refused with the indignant feeling of an innocent man. Then came the story of the rabbit-hutch, &c., of which they had heard so much. He was now talking, not of a magistrate of the country, not of a judge of the land, not of a judge of the great sessions of Wales, or of a recorder of a borough—but of the wrongs and sufferings inflicted upon a poor and unprotected individual. The hon. and learned member adverted again to the facts stated in the Morning Chronicle, relative to Mr. Kenrick—facts which had never been rebutted by that gentleman or his friends—and went on to ask whether, if a person so convicted of improper conduct, as that person had been, were now to be recommended to the office of magistrate, or Welch judge, or recorder of a borough, his majesty's ministers would feel it right to appoint him to any of those offices? Assuredly they would not; and, if he was unfit to be so appointed, was he not unfit to be continued in any one of those offices? If all which he had stated was true, and they had undeniable evidence of the facts, was it not a public scandal to continue Mr. Kenrick any longer in the high and important office of an administrator of justice? Let the right hon. gentleman opposite speak. Would he give to such a person the power of life and death, the whole extent of the judicial authority—which would be the case in the present instance, if the colleagues of Mr. Kenrick were absent? Would any man be secure of a fair trial before Mr. Kenrick, for a plank of wood, if the prosecutor was a respectable person? If the motive were not corrupt in the present case, it nevertheless showed a defect of judgment. It had been truly said, that if the conduct of an individual was such that he ought not to be appointed to a situation, he ought, for the same reason, to be removed from any situation he might fill. Would Mr. Kenrick, he asked, be included, after what had transpired, in a commission for an adjoining county? Would his majesty's approbation be given for his appointment to a higher post? If not, how could the government, having the power of displacing this person, and being called upon by duty to do it, continue him in office? Was it necessary that he should actually disgrace himself on the bench before he could be removed? In reply to the objection which he had heard, that a lawyer should not bring forward such a question as this, it should be followed up by a resolution to exclude lawyers from sitting in parliament; for it was such persons who took the liveliest interest in these questions. He had also been told, that a person holding a judicial office ought not to have preferred this charge; but he hoped he could say that no member could be more free from improper motives, or less disposed to take up such a subject unnecessarily than himself. He hoped that gentlemen would feel themselves called upon to entertain this motion. He had performed what he conceived to be a solemn duty, in bringing it before the House. He considered that the charges were all proved, except that which related to Mr. Kenrick's application to withdraw the prosecution on account of Franks's good character; and he would accordingly move, "That it appears to this House, that the charge against William Kenrick, esquire, one of his majesty's justices of great session in Wales, has been fully established by evidence, except so far as it imputes to him that he applied for leave to withdraw his prosecution against John Franks, on account of his good character."

The *Attorney General* said, he rose to oppose the motion, giving his hon. and learned friend, at the same time, full credit for having introduced it solely from a pure and conscientious sense of public duty. But, at the same time, after all that he had heard, he felt bound to come to a conclusion very different to that at which his hon. and learned friend had arrived. He felt that his hon. and learned friend had no right to bring into that House one grave and specific charge, and then turn round and call upon them to convict the accused party upon another. His hon. and learned friend stated, that he did not wish to proceed upon his first charge against Mr. Kenrick, but that there was another and a graver charge of which that

gentleman had been guilty. He begged the House to bear in their recollection the original charge. It was, that Mr. Kenrick had preferred a charge of felony against Franks, and, without giving sufficient evidence, had had him committed and brought to trial. There was no accusation of corrupt motives or of malice; yet his hon. and learned friend said, not that this charge was proved, but that another charge of a deeper character had been substantiated, which Mr. Kenrick had never been called upon to answer. Had this proceeding taken place before another tribunal, his hon. and learned friend would have been told, that he was not competent to adopt this course, that he must confine himself to the record. The course was unjust to Mr. Kenrick, for this obvious reason: could the House be sure that if the charge had been differently worded, Mr. Kenrick would not have adduced evidence to refute it? This was enough to show the unjust course pursued by his hon. and learned friend. But, was it any offence to prosecute a man on insufficient evidence? Could any civil action be maintained, could any verdict be got, against a man on account of such an act, unless malice could be shown? The terms of the charge contained no crime cognizable by law. Mr. Kenrick was charged with having preferred an accusation on insufficient evidence; but, this very evidence was adduced before Mr. Burgess, who committed the prisoner. It followed, then, that Mr. Burgess must be charged as well as Mr. Kenrick. On that very evidence, too, the grand jury found the bill. No undue influence over the witnesses was imputed; there was nothing to impeach their character: they told the same story to Mr. Kenrick, to Mr. Burgess, and to the grand jury; and the House was now called upon to say that Mr. Kenrick was actuated by malicious motives. His hon. and learned friend said, that the property was of trifling value; it might be so: the owner of the property was the fittest person to judge of the propriety of prosecuting. The law said, that the act of taking it was a crime; and if the party prosecuted in a legal manner, and without corrupt motives, where was the crime? With regard to the slab, it was admitted on all hands that the property had been found on Franks'spremises, and the conduct of the different branches of his family was of a nature to excite the strongest suspicions. When the bailiff or servant of Mr. Kenrick first proceeded to Franks's, he measured the slab of timber, and returned to his master. On his going there a second time, the wife of Franks asked him, in a bullying tone, what business he had there? and added, before a word respecting Mr. Kenrick had been spoken, "that the timber did not belong to Mr. Kenrick." The son of Franks, too, a lad about fourteen, blustered and said, that the piece of timber had been the property of his father for years. To this, the servant of Mr. Kenrick answered by cutting a piece of the slab, and pointing out that, from its green state, it could not have been more than a month cut. It was not asserted now, that the father stole the timber, but the conduct of the family was of a nature to cause a suspicion that it had been taken by some of his family, with his privity. Now, with respect to the cottage, what was the evidence upon that subject? Why, Mr. Kenrick stated, that at one time he had offered to purchase the cottage; but that afterwards, on Franks's refusal to sell it, he had abandoned the intention altogether, and that took place six years ago: and so completely had he abandoned the intention, that though a better and more convenient cottage, immediately contiguous to the spot, had been offered, he declined to purchase it. Yet, although such was the fact, it was now stated, that he had instituted this proceeding against Franks for the purpose of obtaining possession of this cottage. Still, although Mr. Kenrick swore he had no malicious or corrupt view, but that he acted solely from a sense of the public duty he had to discharge, this charge was still persisted in, contrary not only to the probability of the case, but to the positive affidavit of Mr. Kenrick. The other alleged ground was, Mr. Kenrick's wish to make a footpath over Franks's ground. What was stated on oath on this subject by Mr. Kenrick? Why, that he had given a portion of his land in exchange for some allotments given to Franks and Gates, of less value than his own portion of land, and that he had told Franks, a pathway ought to be made across his allotment, in order to enable Gates, whose cottage was immediately contiguous, to enjoy more fully his own allotment. Yet, this had been insisted on as a proof of a corrupt motive on the part of Mr. Kenrick, and of hostility towards Franks.—Another circumstance stated was, that Mr. Kenrick had tampered with Franks's

wife, attempting to induce her, during her husband's confinement, to make an application for relief to the overseers, by which she would be compelled to sell the cottage. This statement was also positively denied. Its truth, if there was any truth in it, might have been established by witnesses at the bar, and yet there had not been any evidence on that subject. If, therefore, the House asked whether Mr. Kenrick's motives were malicious and corrupt, was not the whole charge negatived? In his opinion, it was. So much, then, for the first part, which, he thought, had been negatived by Mr. Kenrick's testimony, to impeach which, not even an attempt had been made.—This brought him to the consideration of the second part of the charge: that which imputed to Mr. Kenrick that he had published a libel on the character and conduct of Franks. Now, that it was a libel, was yet to be proved; and he had always understood that the burthen of proof lay upon the prosecutor. Because it was not proved, the House was not to draw inferences on the subject; they were not to call on Mr. Kenrick to answer that which had not been established against him. Yet such appeared to have been the doctrine of his hon. and learned friend, who had said, "though, it is true, I have not established the charge of the publication of the libel by Mr. Kenrick, in the Stamford newspaper, yet Mr. Kenrick is bound to clear himself from that charge." What was now stated, and that, too, by his hon. and learned friend, was, that a man was bound to clear himself from a charge not made out against him by the public prosecutor. Even though that charge had been made out, he apprehended there was no very great crime in writing a letter to a private connection, in explanation of a circumstance respecting which he had requested information. Mr. Collett had written a letter to Mr. Kenrick, and this alleged libel was the letter written in answer to that of Mr. Collett. Before he adverted to the terms of this letter, he wished to call the attention of the House to part of the evidence relating to the question whether it had been published by Mr. Kenrick. The fact was, that it had been published by Drakard, under the direction of Mr. Collett; but Drakard did not state that he had been authorized by Mr. Kenrick to publish the letter. The attorney for the Morning Chronicle had called on Mr. Kenrick, and had asked him whether that letter was his—not whether it had been published by his authority or with his knowledge, but whether it was his—and Mr. Kenrick refused, as he was at liberty to do, to answer the question. Mr. Collett, on being applied to, said he would not give up the original, and he himself would take the consequence. In his opinion, there was no evidence whatever of publication. What was the nature of this letter? An application had been made to Mr. Kenrick to explain some circumstances which had been stated respecting him, and he had written an answer which was subsequently published. Now, when there was no evidence that that letter had been published by the authority of Mr. Kenrick, was it for that House to take notice of it, written, as it had been, under such peculiar circumstances? Did his learned friend mean to say that Mr. Kenrick was bound to give evidence that he had no concern in the publication? But, after all, suppose he had, was it not too much to say, that when he was goaded as he had been, day by day, he was to be strictly called to account, because, in a moment of irritation, he had gone beyond the letter of what was capable of proof? What were the charges in this letter? One related to a petty theft committed by the daughter, in which the father was stated to have been an abettor. That charge was not one got up by Mr. Kenrick for the purposes of the moment; for it appeared, by the statement of Franks himself, that when the charge was first made, Mr. Kenrick had got up in a great passion, and had said, that if he could get hold of Franks, he should be made an example of. All this had passed in a room in a small cottage, and that the articles alleged to have been stolen by the daughter, were articles of petty theft, which could hardly have been concealed from the knowledge of her parents.—He admitted that with respect to the sheep, the charge must be allowed, on the testimony of Mr. Peters, to have been unfounded. But though that charge was not true, it did not follow that Mr. Kenrick might not honestly have believed it at the moment. He said this in justice to Mr. Kenrick, or he should rather say, as declaring to the House his own impression on the subject. He thought there was no sufficient evidence to support the present charge. In the first place, there was none that the letter had been published by the desire of Mr. Ken-

rick. He merely now, as an individual, impartially stated the evidence on which he founded his own opinion. No man felt more than he did the great importance of keeping the seat of justice pure: no man was more fully convinced how much depended on the character of the individuals who filled the seats of public justice, nor of the absolute necessity that their motives and conduct should be unsuspected; and he would be the last to support any individual who had proved himself unworthy of administering justice to a free people. His right hon. friend behind him had reminded him of one point of the evidence which he had omitted, and which regarded the conduct of Mr. Kenrick after Franks had been committed to prison. It was suggested in the Morning Chronicle, that Mr. Kenrick, after five or six weeks had elapsed, found himself in an awkward situation, and was *desirous to get out of it.* Now, the evidence on that point showed, that a few days before the sessions commenced, Franks's wife applied to Beall, to intercede with his master on behalf of her husband, and on his representations, Mr. Kenrick said he would write to the gaoler to know how Franks had conducted himself; for that if he had manifested any signs of contrition, he would take care the sentence should be lenient. If the House believed that Mr. Kenrick thought Franks innocent, and yet wished him to plead guilty, undoubtedly it would be a serious offence; but there was no evidence of that, while, on the other hand, the case was very different if Mr. Kenrick believed Franks to be guilty. In that case, he might be of opinion that, though guilty, Franks had been sufficiently punished by the three months' imprisonment he had already suffered, and that after such a punishment it was likely he would return a reformed member of society, and, for that reason, Mr. Kenrick determined to use his influence to obtain a very lenient sentence. This had come to the knowledge of Franks's wife, and she had said, that the leniency of the sentence would be utterly unavailing, for that Franks was a subscriber to a benefit fund, and that if he was convicted, he would, by that conviction, forfeit all title to relief from it. Mr. Kenrick then said, he would interfere to prevent the prosecution being pressed. Under similar circumstances, what gentleman was there in that House who would not do the same? Franks had already suffered punishment, which Mr. Kenrick deemed sufficient to have reformed him, and therefore, to prevent his conviction taking place, he wrote a letter to the clerk of the peace, who sent an answer, that the prosecution could not be given up without the recognizances being forfeited. His learned friend had said, that Mr. Kenrick ought to have persevered strictly in the prosecution. From that opinion he differed. The two witnesses were bound to appear, but there was no such obligation on Mr. Kenrick, and he was therefore fully at liberty to say, that the witness who was under his control, and whose testimony was most material, should not attend the trial, and that he would not employ counsel against the prisoner. He did so, and when the case was called on, as there was no counsel to press for a conviction, nor any witness to give testimony, Franks was discharged. There was no gentleman in the House who would not do the same, when there was no obligation to continue a prosecution, that, if successful, must end in the ruin of the prisoner's family. Was this, too, to be imputed to Mr. Kenrick, as proceeding from a corrupt and hostile motive towards Franks? The statement that Mr. Kenrick was desirous Franks should plead guilty, could not be reconciled with the fact that he would not pursue the prosecution, and that he kept back a witness who could swear to that most important circumstance, of the slab having been in Franks's possession. How could it be said, therefore, that he had desired Franks to plead guilty, when he did not use the means in his power to pursue that prosecution with success? This was the third and last charge against Mr. Kenrick, and this, he thought, was answered as fully as the other two.—Before he sat down, he would allude to the prejudice which had gone abroad against Mr. Kenrick, upon what had been done in the court of King's-bench. It was generally supposed that the judges of that court had investigated the matter, and had given their judgment against Mr. Kenrick on the merits of the case. Such was not the fact. One counsel only, and that counsel employed for the defendant, had been heard, when the court decided the question on a ground foreign to the merits of the question. Their ground of decision was, that as the alleged libel on Mr. Kenrick had been published, that gentleman had his remedy by indictment

for libel, to which they would leave him. As to the costs, when the court were asked to grant them, their lordships said, that if the defendant insisted on having his costs, they must hear the other side; the question of costs, therefore, was not pressed. He said this by way of removing a prejudice which had gone abroad against Mr. Kenrick, as if the court of King's-bench had, in fact, decided against him on the merits of the case. He had now only to observe, that he had known Mr. Kenrick in early life, and afterwards in courts of justice, and had never known him to do any thing that was improper. He had also been employed as an advocate against that gentleman in the court of King's-bench. He did not know what were the exact limits of the duties of a counsel, but his impression was, that it was the duty of a counsel zealously to fulfil the charge consigned to him, without prejudice or partiality, and without regard to consequences, whatever they might be. With such ideas of the duty of a counsel, he had appeared against Mr. Kenrick, discharging from his mind all partial recollections; and now, acting as a member of parliament, and called upon to give his opinion on a grave and serious charge, he felt himself bound to say that he considered it not proved, and that he must therefore give a decided negative to the motion.

Mr. *Denman* shortly replied. He said, that under all the circumstances of the case, he should not press the House to a division; but he was, at the same time, bound to declare, that his opinions remained unaltered, and that if he had the giving or refusing of judicial offices, he would not confer any situation on Mr. Kenrick. Neither had his hon. and learned friend ventured to declare, that if he had such power he should consider Mr. Kenrick a fit object of judicial nomination. It was easy to anticipate what would be the result of his motion; but he was nevertheless sure that the people of England would not consider themselves well used, if Mr. Kenrick was continued in office. He decidedly differed from the hon. and learned gentleman as to the effect of the evidence in the case; particularly as to the fact of Mr. Kenrick's having kept back the material witness at Franks's trial. He did not believe that that witness could have proved any thing more than had been proved in his absence. If the House had not been already annoyed by the length of these discussions, he would have pressed this proceeding further. His opinion, he repeated, remained unaltered. He had done what he considered to be his duty, and should leave the case with the House.

The resolution was then put, and negatived.

Navy Estimates.] The report of the committee of supply was brought up. On the question, that it be read,

Sir *F. Ommaney* complained of the low rate of remuneration which clerks in the Admiralty received, and also of the difficulty which the widows of assistant-surgeons experienced in procuring pensions. He meant on a future day to move for an account of all widows of assistant-surgeons who had applied for pensions between 1805 and 1809, when the new regulations were carried into effect.

On the first resolution, "That 30,000 men be employed for the sea-service, for the year 1826, including 9,000 Royal marines,"

Mr. *Hume* said, that he must oppose the naval or any other establishment being formed on so large a scale as ministers seemed inclined to propose at the present moment. They had had an opportunity of examining the whole scale on which it was intended that the military establishment should be kept up, and he was justified in saying, that no such establishment was ever thought of at any former period of peace. He therefore wished to know whether there was any prospect of a return to what might fairly be denominated a real peace establishment? At this awful moment, when distress and difficulty threatened the land in every direction—when no immediate relief appeared in view—and when thousands and tens of thousands were in a state of destitution and want, it would become his majesty's ministers to reflect a little on what they were about. He was quite sure that the estimates, so monstrous did they appear, were agreed on at a time when ministers were not aware of the real state of the country. In former times, this country maintained a very different peace establishment, both with respect to the number of men and the magnitude of the expense; and he was anxious to know what were the circumstances at the present moment which required so disproportionate an establishment, as compared with antecedent pe-

riods of our history. When the late war was terminated, that House had appointed a committee to inquire into the state of the finances generally, and also into the management and expenditure of every particular department; and he regretted to say, that the recommendations contained in the reports agreed upon by that committee, and approved of by ministers, had been, as it appeared to him, uniformly neglected. They were now going on increasing the burthens of the country, without any reason whatever being assigned for their conduct; and he believed if 12,000,000*l.* instead of 6,000,000*l.* were demanded for the naval service, it would be at once voted, although 2,000,000*l.* had been found sufficient at the end of former wars. In 1817, immediately after a long war, when Europe was in an unsettled state, and America was in such a situation with respect to this country, that it was scarcely possible to guess how the scale would turn, only 19,000 seamen were called for. In 1818, there was an addition of 1,000. In 1819, the same number, 20,000, was continued. In 1820, it was raised to 23,000. In 1823, there was a further increase to 25,000. In 1824, the number was 29,000. Last year it was continued at 29,000; and now, without any reason whatever being assigned, parliament was called on to vote 30,000 men, with all the accompanying expense. An hon. baronet had just alluded to the situation of a number of unfortunate widows, whom he had kindly taken under his protection. Certain it was, that very many persons who had claims on the government were plunged in deep distress and could procure no relief, whilst they saw young men of rank and family, who needed no assistance, amply provided for. Such individuals were too often hoisted over the heads of men of talent and experience; and, while the labours of the latter went unrequited, the former were quartered on the public purse. Not a promotion took place, in which, if gentlemen examined the list, they would not see that persons who had no claim to rank, were advanced before those whose services deserved a different recompense. The navy and the army were filled with instances of this kind. It was indeed, nothing more nor less than a mode of pensioning individuals; and he regretted to say that there appeared to be a disposition in the aristocracy of the country to get their friends and relatives thus pensioned on the public. While the great mass of the people had scarcely bread to eat, taxes were imposed on them without number, to keep up this useless expense. The promotion at present going on in the army and navy would be found to be greater than what had taken place at any period of the war; due allowance being made for the difference in the number of men employed now and formerly. Such a system ought no longer to be suffered. He regretted very much that the claims of the meritorious individuals who had been alluded to by the hon. baronet had not been attended to; but he believed the fact to be, that neither they, nor any other set of persons, unless they had interest with the lords of the Admiralty, were likely to receive pensions at their hands. Five officers were kept up, where one would be sufficient; and that, it seemed, was the mode in which the people were to be relieved from their taxes. From the estimate now before the House, they learned, that a sum of 6,135,000*l.* was to be expended on the navy for the current year. This was more than the estimate for the last two or three years; and surely it was monstrous that they should thus proceed, year after year, in thus burthening the people, without making an effort to correct the system. This extravagance was not confined to the navy. It was still more glaring in the army; and he must say, that he would willingly reduce the army one half, to keep the navy on an efficient, but not a uselessly extravagant footing. This was a naval nation, and that arm of our strength ought to be kept pre-eminently powerful. The system of wasteful expenditure which was now adopted could not be carried on, unless ministers made up their minds, ere long, to rob the public creditor. It was shameful, in times of public distress, to extract from fifty-five, to sixty millions a year from the pockets of an impoverished people. He was sorry he did not see a minister in his place, because he wished to impress on the minds of those who were at the head of affairs, the necessity of their giving these estimates a reconsideration. They ought to look to the situation of the country, and extend some substantial relief to the people. He would not, on his own authority, state any thing against the mode in which any particular department was conducted: but he felt himself borne

out in this instance, with respect to his charge of wanton extravagance, by the reports to which he had alluded. He was anxious, if he stood alone, to record his opinion as to what the House ought to do in this period of suffering; and what, he would add, if they had a reformed parliament, that House would do; namely, compel ministers to reduce those estimates, and to revise the expenditure of all those departments which weighed heavily on the people, and of which they most justly complained. Was it not dreadful to see 27,000,000*l.* annually wrung from the people to keep up our military and civil establishments—exclusive of the charges connected with the national debt? They would, in a few days, hear from ministers a statement of the financial situation of the country. He wished they would announce their intention of reducing the burthens of the people; but he feared there was no hope of such a communication being made; for, had it been intended, the House would before this have heard some intimation of the matter. The motion with which he should conclude appeared to him to be so reasonable, that he should hope for its success under almost any circumstances, but more particularly when the accounts from every part of the country must have directed the attention of gentlemen to the extreme distress which existed in all quarters, and which imperatively called on them to reflect on the result that before long might take place, if they did not adopt a change of system. The hon. gentleman concluded by moving as an amendment,—"That this House cannot take into consideration the reports of the naval estimates of this, the eleventh year of peace, amounting to 6,135,004*l.*, without expressing their concurrence in opinion with the committee of Finance of 1818, expressed in their eighth report in the following words:—'This, although a head of 'very large expenditure, is one on which 'your committee do not consider them- 'selves competent to judge. They con- 'ceive that the amount and preparation 'of ships of war must be left to the 'sound discretion of the government gen- 'erally, and of the board whose duty it is, 'more particularly, to manage this most 'important department of the state. Al- 'ways bearing in mind that not ships and 'stores and military arrangements are alone 'necessary for the safety, or for the glory 'of the country, in the event of war; but 'that finances recruited during peace, 'and wealth, and industry generally dif- 'fused through the nation by all prac- 'ticable savings of expense, and conse- 'quent diminution of burthens, are, at 'least, of equal importance; while they 'mainly contribute towards the happiness 'and comfort of all classes of society at 'the present time.' And this House recommends to the ministers of the Crown their reconsideration of the estimates, with the view of reducing their amount, consonant to the opinion of the Finance Committee, and the better to suit the present circumstances of the country." He did not mean to cavil at particular parts of the estimates. He had already done that in the committee; but, seeing the aggregate amount, and seeing how little suitable they were to the present state of the country, he made his present motion to call on the House to stop the extravagance of his majesty's ministers. If they were determined to persist in their career, he, at least, should have done his duty.

Lord *John Russell* seconded the amendment. The navy estimates were, he said, framed on a most inordinate scale, and he believed that the army estimates would be found still more extravagant. He would therefore divide the House with his hon. friend.

Sir *G. Cockburn* said, he was surprised that the hon. member for Aberdeen should have asserted, that no reason had been assigned for the increase in the navy estimates. He begged the hon. member to recollect, that his hon. friend, in bringing those estimates forward, had stated, that the increase this year was owing to the war in India, and to the necessity which existed for keeping up a naval force in various parts of the world. The general state of the commerce of the country was such, that ministers could not withhold this force, without creating general discontent amongst the merchants. There was no part of the world in which the commerce of Great Britain was not going on at that moment; and armed ships had been sent for abroad for the purpose of protecting that commerce. It was the duty of the Admiralty to see that those vessels were properly distributed. They were obliged to send ships up the Mediterranean, where the British were likely to be attacked by the belligerents on both sides. Again, it was necessary to station vessels of war in the West-Indies; and they were likewise called for on the coast

of Africa. There was no part of the world in which a British naval force was not looked up to for protection; and they had acquitted themselves wonderfully well wherever they had been employed. Their naval officers, he admitted, were no great diplomatists; but in their intercourse with the newly recognized states they had acted wisely. They had insured peace and quiet wherever they appeared; and they had maintained the honour and reputation of the British flag. If that House were filled with merchants, he was convinced they would all rise with one accord, and bear testimony to the benefits they had derived from the system pursued by the Admiralty. The money now called for would be most advantageously laid out; since it would enable this country in spite of the wars of other powers, to carry on a flourishing commerce with every part of the world. The hon. member for Aberdeen had advanced one assertion, which he would meet with a direct contradiction. The hon. member had stated, that the claim of no man was listened to at the Admiralty, unless he possessed family interest. He denied the charge altogether. He attended himself at the Admiralty in rotation; and he would say, that no person, from the highest to the lowest, ever asked to see him, whom he did not see, and whose business he did not hear. And he would tell the hon. member in the face of the House and of the country, that he paid less attention to a man who had family interest than to one who was without it. He would say more. He would tell the hon. member—and many officers could bear witness to the fact—that when men without interest had stated their cases to him, he had done his utmost to bring them forward. The charge, therefore, of the hon. member was most unjust and unfair. He could assert, without fear of contradiction, that in proportion as the Admiralty brought forward persons of rank, they, with equal readiness, assisted others who had no recommendation of that kind. Length of service, and a knowledge of the profession, were never overlooked, let the situation of the individual be what it might. The services of the father were very frequently considered in the promotion of his sons; and it could not be denied that this was a fair and proper course of proceeding for the Admiralty to observe.

Mr. *Robertson* complained, that on so important a vote there was not a minister of the Crown in his place. The apology for keeping up a large naval force made by the hon. lord of the Admiralty was totally inadequate; namely, the war in India. Now, the war in India no more required an increase of the navy than would a war in the middle of Germany. It was totally impossible that a naval force could act in the Burmese war. Such a reason could only have been offered on the presumption of the utmost ignorance among members of the seat of war in India. There was no warlike navigation among those nations. True it was that in the mouths of rivers there were occasionally forts which were accessible by boats; but the weakest vessel that could swim, if she could only hold out the voyage and the landing of the troops, would be powerful enough for any maritime purposes of that war.

Mr. *Croker* said, that the hon. member for Grampound attributed to the Admiralty the most perfect ignorance of the geographical situation of India.

Mr. *Robertson* said, "No:" his expression was, that the Admiralty presumed on the ignorance of the House.

Mr. *Croker*.—Well, then, it was not the Admiralty who were ignorant, they were well enough acquainted with the business; but they came down to impose upon parliament with a falsehood ["No, no," from various quarters]. Well then, a fallacy; which was, that some part of the naval force was to be employed in India. Now, he had one short fact to state, in answer to the representation of the hon. gentleman. That very morning it had fallen to his lot as secretary to the Admiralty, to receive despatches from a commander in India. That officer mentioned, that he had collected a naval force to act on the rivers of Rangoon, which he expected would be of the greatest use; and that it consisted of a greater number of men than the total increase of sailors demanded by the present vote.

Sir *C. Cole* defended the Admiralty from the charge of an unfair use of favour and affection in promotions. He would mention a proof of the contrary, within his own knowledge. He had taken two deserving youths by the hand, who had done themselves honour in the service; they were the sons of an officer of distinguished merit, but they were for a time over-looked. He no sooner made their case known to the Admiralty than their promotion was secured to them. From

all that he had seen, this was the usual character of their proceedings. As to the necessity of a naval force in India, he had been for many years on that station, and it had astonished him that we could hold so vast a dominion with a naval force so small as was kept there. The House would recollect the limits taken in by that station. It was a full quarter of the earth's surface, reaching, in direct longitude, from the coast of Arabia to the Pacific Ocean. True it was, that there were no powerful fleets in those seas; but, there were many forts upon the mouths of rivers which gave occasion for the employment of vessels of war and boats. But, there were reasons for keeping up a considerable force in other quarters. The Mediterranean station evidently required a considerable force to protect our commerce; especially while a piratical war was raging between the Greeks and Turks. He thought the service could not be properly maintained with a less number of men.

Mr. *Wyvill* would vote for the amendment, in order to compel ministers to observe the strictest economy.

Mr. *Herries* said, that the object of the amendment was not so much to negative the vote for the navy, as to put a stop to the grant of supplies generally; which, of course, the House had the power to do, though it was a power rarely exercised, and not without the statement of more cogent reasons than those urged by the hon. member for Aberdeen. So far from its being true that ministers had no regard for economy, they had evinced, from year to year, the utmost anxiety to promote it; and the time chosen by the hon. gentleman for bringing forward his amendment was not a little extraordinary, recollecting that it was upon bringing up the report of the committee whose resolutions had been agreed to unanimously. With regard to the absence of ministers, he denied that it was necessary that they should attend to listen to the often repeated recommendations of the hon. member. They had observed the most rigid economy in every department, and had carried reductions to the utmost extent. Year after year, and item by item, the navy estimates had been scrutinized with the utmost patience, and the increase of the present vote above that of 1817 had been frequently justified; so that nothing could be more absurd than to treat it as if the augmentation were entirely new, and required arguments in support of it.

Colonel *Davies* thought, that this was a fit opportunity for the exercise of that great economical check which lay in parliament. No good reason had been given for keeping up so enormous an establishment. Were they, in a time of peace and in a season of universal distress to go on voting away large and unnecessary quantities of the public money? Ought they not rather, as guardians of the public purse, when that distress was likely to be aggravated by the measure now in progress, to restore the currency, to force upon government the most rigid economy? He would vote for the amendment, and when the report of the army estimates should come up, he would oppose the reception of it, unless it was accompanied with some pledge of serious reduction on the part of ministers.

Captain *Gordon* adverted to the charge, that branches of families of rank and influence were placed in the navy, in order that they might receive pensions out of the pocket of the public. How stood the fact? Any person entering the army must serve six years before he would be entitled to half-pay at all. He knew of several officers of acknowledged gallantry and merit, who, after serving thirty years or more, received a pension of about 180*l*. Surely these allowances were not burthensome pensions, but limited rewards for services performed to the country.

Mr. *Tremayne* conceived that the strictest economy was necessary in all the departments of the state, and therefore he should vote for the amendment.

Mr. *Hobhouse* begged it to be understood that he did not object to the navy estimates generally; but he could not, in the present condition of the country, approve of money being voted without the strictest necessity for it. In thus expressing himself, he trusted he should not be charged with a wish to embarrass ministers. The measures which they had brought forward this session, with the exception of the one last night, had met with his approbation; but, on that occasion, certainly, he thought it to be his duty to vote against them, inasmuch as he conceived they had departed from their own principles. With respect to the necessity of a reduction in the expenditure, he was satisfied, that throughout the country there was but one opinion, that such establishments could not be kept

up, especially if ministers persevered in that measure, which he must deem an eminently wise one, of returning to a metallic currency. It was every man's settled conviction; that with the contraction of the circulating medium which that measure would occasion, it would not be possible to keep up those establishments; unless, indeed, ministers had made up their minds to the desperate alternative of breaking faith with the public creditor. The speech from the throne assured the House, that no rupture of the peace of Europe was expected; and the tranquillity of Ireland rendered any additional force in that quarter unnecessary; therefore it would be absurd for ministers to come to parliament this year and demand the same amount of supplies for the army year after year. He imputed no blame to the lords of the Admiralty. He made no charge of partiality or undue influence *personally* against them. He objected to the system—to the representative system —to maintain which, ministers found it necessary to court the support of the great, by providing for their dependants. One gallant officer, to disprove the charge of improper influence, had told the House of his taking two deserving youths by the hand down to the Admiralty, and introducing them there with success. Why, this was the very case of his hon. friend, the member for Aberdeen. Their merits might have claimed and acquired for them promotion without the recommendation of the gallant officer. But, then, what was the effect of his introduction? Surely he ought to recollect how the public would view this transaction. They would not forget that the gallant officer was a member of parliament, and that by some accident or other, he always found himself at liberty. In short, it was clear, that his recommendation was strong, because he was a member of parliament. He knew a captain in the navy, who had frequently declared that it was ridiculous to suppose that any claim made by individuals would be listened to, unless there was parliamentary interest to support them. There were exceptions, he knew, to this; for many gallant officers had risen to the head of the profession without such aid. However, it was a fact well known, that the current of favour generally set the way of parliamentary interest. This was the general impression, not only in the naval service, but among the people at large.

The House divided; for the Amendment 15,. Against it 43.

List of the Minority.

Allen, J. A.	Russell, lord J.
Cavendish, H.	Taylor, M. A.
Denman, T.	Tremayne, J. H.
Evans, W.	Wyvell, M.
Grattan, J.	Whitbread, S.
Hobhouse, J. C.	Wood, Alderman
Monck, J. B.	TELLERS.
Palmer, F.	Hume, J.
Robertson, Alex.	Davies, col.

On the resolution, that 896,000*l.* be granted for defraying the expense of the half-pay of the unemployed officers of his majesty's fleet,

Sir *C. Cole* expressed his regret at the hardships which half-pay officers of the navy underwent, in consequence of their being obliged to employ themselves in other professions, owing to the inadequate provision afforded to them by government. Many of those officers had adopted other professions; some had gone into holy orders; and he could not but consider it as a great hardship that their half-pay, which they had so well earned in the service of their country, should in consequence be taken from them.

Mr. *Hume* being the first person who had introduced the subject of officers going into the church, could not help offering a few words. He was anxious to learn what steps government would take with respect to officers entering the church. They did not seem to know how to act on the subject; for an order in council had passed taking off the half-pay of officers in holy orders, and a subsequent order had restored it to them again. He could not but consider it a hardship that in this latter order, an exception had been made with respect to marine officers. It was certainly not fair to give half-pay to one class of officers, and to take it from another. On what principle of justice or policy were officers who had served in the marines to be exempted from the benefits enjoyed by others? From all he could learn, there were but four retired marine officers who were in a situation to claim it.

Sir *G. Cockburn* said, that the system which had always been adopted by the Admiralty was this—that no person in the naval department should be allowed to enjoy half-pay, unless he consented to join the navy again, should his services be required. It was impossible always to act upon this system, government had been attempted to be imposed upon in more than one instance. A person who came

in turn to be employed, had written to the Admiralty, requesting to be allowed to go upon the reserve half-pay list; but it being discovered that he was in holy orders, his request was at once dismissed. Another person had been struck off the half-pay list, when it was found that he had taken holy orders. Not very long since, it had been the practice in the army to suffer half-pay officers who had gone into the church to retain their half-pay; but when the principle came to be considered, the army saw the necessity of the measure adopted by the Admiralty, and it was now an established rule, that every person so situated should forthwith dispose of his commission.

The several resolutions were then agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, February 22.

South American Treaties Bill.] On the order of the day for the second reading of this bill,

Mr. *Robertson* begged the attention of the House to the conduct of his majesty's government, with respect to the commercial interests of the empire. They had sacrificed already too much to a dangerous delusion, namely, that of violating the navigation laws which hitherto protected our carrying trade all over the world, in order to found on it the new system of free trade. These regulations of commerce had not only been extended to the butter trade, but to the ports of an old rival nation in commercial transactions, the Dutch. They, however, viewing every thing which affected their interests with their ancient jealousy, no sooner perceived that England put a small duty on foreign salt, than they repealed the concessions they had made in favour of British commerce. With respect to the state of Buenos Ayres, our ministers had adopted a principle altogether foreign to the constitution of this maritime country, and permitted the import of goods of that country in ships, not only of that, but of other states. Similarly objectionable stipulations had been entered into between this country and the new states of Colombia, which must open the trade of this country to strangers; as it was notoriously the fact, that the rights of citizenship would be acquired in Colombia by a week's residence. He would have been much better satisfied had he had an opportunity of making these statements in the presence of the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade, but even in his absence he felt himself bound to make them.

Sir *Robert H. Inglis* said, he rose, not to follow the hon. member for Grampound in his observations on the commercial points of the Colombian treaty, which alone, as he was willing to admit, were formally and technically before the House, and as little to object to that treaty generally, but to take this opportunity of calling to the attention of the House one article in it which to him appeared to involve interests far higher than those of any commerce, and to commit the character of the country and the cause of religion. The article to which he referred was the 12th, which stipulates that the Colombians resident in England, shall be entitled to exercise their worship in public and in private with most full and ample toleration; while it stipulates that the English, resident in Colombia, shall be permitted to exercise their religion in their own houses only. In reference to the first point, he, as an Englishman, felt almost degraded, that at this day toleration should be granted to a Colombian arriving here, as if it were a new boon; as if it were in the power of the negociators to give it, or to withhold it; as if it were not almost a chemical ingredient in the air of England. But what is the reciprocal advantage obtained by England? The reciprocity, as was said in the American war, is all on one side: the English residents in Colombia are permitted to worship God in their own houses. Every other article in the treaty gives some benefit to one party, and some corresponding benefit to the other,

"Grove nods at grove, each alley has its brother."

But here there is a most lame and impotent conclusion; the Colombian is to enjoy, as he ought, the fullest and freest exercise of his religion here, as free as any other Roman Catholic; the Englishman is to have the free exercise of his religion in his own house. The truth is, that the Colombian government has mocked us, as the English negociators mocked them. Both have granted what they could not withhold. If it be said, that there was a law in Colombia preventing any assemblage in private houses for religious purposes, and therefore that something was gained as to that point

by this treaty, he denied the fact; because, by the constitution of that state, there is no provision made for the exclusion of any one religion. If it be said, that though there is no such law, yet that in practice English merchants have been disturbed in assembling at each other's houses, he denied the fact as to Colombia, and doubted it as to any other part of Spanish America. So much for what has been done: as to what might have been done, he would consider first the circumstances of the state of Colombia itself, and then the precedent of Buenos Ayres. There were many circumstances in the state of Colombia peculiarly favourable, as it appeared, to the admission of religious toleration. In the first place, there was the silence of the constitution as to any exclusive religion in the state; in the next, there was the personal character of the great man who founded and who defends that constitution; who, high as he is in talents and services, and disinterested virtue, is not less high in the estimation of Europe and America for his liberal and enlightened support of every good object. He begun his career by the abolition of slavery; and set the example by the emancipation of his own slaves; he has now been encouraging universal education. In the third place, the character of those who administer the government in his absence is equally favourable to liberal views. The House will recollect that this treaty was signed at Bogota on the 18th of last April; one of the plenipotentiaries being Don Pedro Gual, the secretary of state for foreign affairs. On the 4th of that same April, there was established in the same city, a bible society, under the presidency of the same secretary of state. The meeting was very numerously attended; and, though the object was opposed by two very respectable ecclesiastics, their opposition was overcome, and the society was finally established. It is a minor fact, but not unimportant, as showing the state of the public mind and public opinion, that the secretary of the new society had been secretary to the Inquisition, and the place of the meetings of the society is the former hall of the Inquisition. This is at least some proof that the public mind was more prepared for liberality than might have been expected from the results of this treaty. He did not blame the talents, the firmness, the zeal of the plenipotentiaries, but he thought that he had said enough to prove that something was wanting somewhere to have led to this result. He was sure that it was not owing to any defect in the instructions of the secretary of state for Foreign Affairs, whose large and enlightened policy had been so often and almost so unanimously approved in this House. But this was not all: he had seen yesterday a Bogota newspaper, expressing the feelings which the treaty of England with Buenos Ayres had excited in Colombia: they regretted, referring to the toleration secured by that treaty, that another state had ravished from them the glory of taking precedence in religious toleration: they trust, however, that the example of a state with the same religion, language, laws, and prejudices with their own, will be followed by them; an example which proves to the universe that the people of Buenos Ayres, after having gained their freedom, know how to make use of it. This, indeed, is not the language of a state paper, or of an act of Congress; it is merely the language of a newspaper; but a newspaper at Bogota, as at London, must, to be successful, speak the language, and represent the feelings of a great body of people. When, therefore, he considered these favourable indications—the absence from the constitution of Colombia of any exclusion of toleration; the personal character of Bolivar, in favour of all liberality; the personal character of some of those who administer the government in his absence, and the sympathy of people in Colombia with that liberality, so far as that sympathy can be considered as proved by the passage quoted, it is difficult not to see that a prima facie case is established to justify considerable surprise at the result of this treaty. This was more remarkable when the precedent of Buenos Ayres was remembered. There he found in the treaty with that power the most ample toleration established. If, therefore, the same plenipotentiaries who had been successful in Buenos Ayres had been employed in Bogota, the same results might perhaps have been obtained. He was sure that no instruction could have been wanting on the part of the secretary of state for Foreign Affairs. He did not wish him to have interposed in this negotiation with any threat, still less with the reality of war, if the object were not obtained. But enough had been here said to show how the balance in Colombia was wavering, and though he

would not have wished the right hon. gentleman to have thrown his sword into it, he should have thought that the scale might have been turned by his pen. The time at which this failure took place adds to the regret which it occasions. It was just at the time when the Pope, whose influence in the Trans-Atlantic states had been declining, was endeavouring by his letters to recover that influence there. Those more especially who have contended that the church of Rome has changed, ought to look with more than ordinary regret at this refusal on the part of Colombia to grant toleration—a concession which might appear from so many circumstances to have been attainable. If the consideration of this question were to close here, he would have been content to read the treaty in silent mortification; but it was not merely the duty of the House to consider what had been done, and what might have been done, but also what remained to be done. There were still four states to be recognised—Chili, Peru, Guatimala, and Hayti, besides Mexico and the Brazils, the treaties with which, though in progress, were not ratified. In all these cases, he trusted that the right hon. gentleman would secure for the British subjects the benefits of that toleration which had been lost in Colombia.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he was sorry his right hon. friend, by whose advice the treaty was concluded, was not present, as he had no doubt that full information would have been afforded by him why this point had not been gained in Colombia as in Buenos Ayres. Although the government at Bogota might have been even disposed to make a more liberal concession as to toleration, still it might not follow that the populace might not have been still averse to so violent an extension of religious privileges. It was a matter of congratulation to all who had known any thing of the state of affairs antecedently in those countries to find that even so much had been gained. He could not sit down without remarking, that it was rather singular his hon. friend who spoke last should not, in his anxiety for introducing a more liberal spirit of complete toleration into Catholic states, have turned his thoughts nearer home, and suggested rather than retarded its adoption in a certain protestant country [hear! and a laugh].

Sir *R. H. Inglis* begged his right hon. friend to recollect, that he had always made a distinction between granting religious toleration and granting political power.

Mr. *Irving*, as a member of the Committee of Foreign Trade, felt himself called on to assure the House, that nothing had been neglected on the part of the committee to secure a just reciprocity of advantages to England in the treaty before the House; nor could he believe that the same object had, for a moment, escaped the observation of that part of his majesty's ministers to whose province these commercial arrangements in strictness belonged.

The bill was then read a second time.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, February 23.

Corn Laws.] Lord *Suffield* presented a petition from Ashton-under-Lyne, praying for the repeal or amendment of the Corn-Laws. He said, he could not lay the petition on the table, without expressing his regret, that the difficulties of this measure had not been grappled with during the present session. He agreed with the noble earl, not then in his place, that the discussion of this question was likely to be gone into with a considerable degree of passion. He was as likely as any one of their lordships to lose, in proportion to his wealth, by a fall in the price of corn, for he derived the greater part of his revenue from land; but he was prepared to make any sacrifice that might be for the good of the nation at large. Whatever measure the ministers might bring forward, which were for the public good, he would not oppose them. Perhaps he was wrong in saying a "sacrifice," for he laid claim to no peculiar patriotism; but he was convinced, that no class of society could profit, for any length of time, by any measure which was an injury to the other classes. He thought it was a mistake to suppose that the repeal of the Corn-laws would injure the land-owners. Of one thing he was sure, that the repeal of those laws would prevent fluctuations in price; which was a serious injury to the landed interest as as well as to the other interests of the society.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* expressed his regret, that noble lords, when it was understood that this question was not to

on this session, should take an opportunity, on presenting petitions, to make their little harangues, which, in the present state of the country, might harass the public mind. It pleased the noble lord to assume, that the Corn-laws caused fluctuations in prices, and were kept up for the benefit of the landed interest only; but, if that noble lord would examine the state of prices previous to passing the present law, he would find that there were more extraordinary fluctuations before than since the passing of it. He was sure, whatever might be the effects of that law, that no man in that House would argue for it out of any other motives than a regard to the public welfare.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, February 23.

REDUCTION OF DUTIES ON TOBACCO AND SNUFF.] Mr. *Hume* presented a petition from the importers of Tobacco and Snuff in the town of Belfast, praying for a reduction of the duties thereon. He could not forbear remarking, in presenting this petition, that few things could be more beneficial to the fair trader, more destructive to smuggling, or more advantageous to the revenue, than the reduction of the duties upon these articles. In order to illustrate this, it might be sufficient to refer to the state of the trade from 1810 to 1812, as compared with its condition in 1820 to 1822. In the former period, when the duty was per lb. 2*s*., it was paid on 41 millions of pounds. For the latter period, when the duty was 4*s*. per lb., it was levied on only 33 millions of pounds. Now, the population, and consequently the consumption of the article, must have increased considerably during the latter period, and yet the number of pounds on which the duty was levied had decreased by eight millions. This clearly proved how much the revenue must, in consequence of the high duty, have suffered from the discouragement of consumption and encouragement of smuggling. Similar results had attended these high duties in Ireland, where, notwithstanding the increase of population, the quantity of these articles paying duty, had considerably decreased. He was persuaded, that, if ministers would consent to reduce the duty 1*s*. 6*d*. per lb., smuggling in these articles would entirely cease, and the revenue be, at the same time, greatly benefitted. The proof of this was, the effects which had resulted from the reduction of the duties on Scotch and Irish whiskey; in regard to which the revenue had materially increased, notwithstanding the reduction of duty to the amount of one half.

Mr. *Hart Davis* said, that in consequence of the increase of duties, the number of houses in a certain town engaged in the importation of these articles, had been reduced from eighteen to eight. He agreed, that if the duty were reduced to 1*s*. 6*d*. per lb., smuggling would be almost annihilated, and the fair trader and the revenue greatly benefitted.

PROMISSORY NOTES BILL—PETITION OF WILLIAM COBBETT.] Colonel *Johnson* presented a petition from William Cobbett, expressing great alarm at the power given by the Promissory Notes bill to the Bank of England to issue small notes for a certain period, and stating that it would prevent the return to a metallic currency, unless its operations should be counteracted by other clauses. The petition also stated some instances of hardship, in consequence of the country bankers refusing to pay their notes in coin, and prayed that such bankers might be rendered liable to a distress for payment at the instance of a magistrate, upon twenty-four hours' notice. This was the only part of the petition in which he did not agree, as he thought the time too short, and that three or four days ought to be allowed. He himself knew an instance of a person, who having got possession of some Birmingham bank notes, presented them there for payment in gold. He was answered, that the notes were payable in London, and that at the place of issuing them they would only be paid in Bank of England paper. He trusted that a clause would be inserted in the bill to prevent the recurrence of those difficulties; for unless some such summary mode of enforcing payment were adopted, instead of leaving the parties to the ordinary course of law, they never could have gold in general circulation.

The petition was read as follows:—

"The Petition of William Cobbett, of Kensington, in the county of Middlesex, most humbly shows,

"1. That your Petitioner sees, with great alarm, that the bill now before your honourable House has had introduced

into it a clause to enable the Bank of England to make small notes for a considerable time yet to come; that this power in the Bank of England would, as your petitioner believes, effectually prevent a return to a gold and silver currency, and would, in effect, be a legal tender, in all parts distant from London, unless prevented by other clauses in the said bill.

"2. That your petitioner has been most credibly informed, and that he believes the facts, that a man presented, on Saturday last, to a great country bank at Norwich, one hundred and thirty pounds in the notes of that bank; that he demanded gold for the same, and that he was peremptorily refused payment in any thing except Bank of England notes; that, on the same day, the same man made a similar application to another country bank in the same city; that he not only met here with a similar refusal, but that the bankers threatened to put him in charge of a constable, if he remained and persisted in his demand; and that if your honourable House will permit him, your humble petitioner doubts not that he shall be able to produce proof of these facts at the bar of your honourable House.

"3. Your humble petitioner prays your honourable House to be pleased to reflect, that it has been solely by means of this species of tender, that the country bankers have been able to shut gold out of general circulation; that, as long as they can venture to refuse gold under pretence of paying in Bank of England notes, there can be no gold circulation, and no diminution of the country small notes, because, when it is merely one sort of paper for another, people in the country will, in most cases, prefer the country notes, however much they may suspect their goodness; and that thus, with a very small supply of Bank of England small notes, the country bankers may wholly defeat the laudable design to give the people once more a circulating gold and silver money.

"4. That, in order to prevent such imposition upon the people, and also to prevent those dreadful consequences that must finally result from the continued issue and re-issue of small country notes, your humble petitioner, with great deference and profound respect, begs leave to be permitted to suggest to your honourable House, that it may be enacted in the said bill, and he humbly prays your honourable House to enact, that, in case any country banker shall, under pretence of a tender in Bank of England notes, refuse the legal coin in payment of his own notes, the said banker shall, at the end of twenty-four hours, be liable to a distress, issuing from a justice of the peace, for enforcing immediate payment in coin, and that he shall, moreover, be liable to a penalty for such illegal refusal; or, your petitioner most humbly prays, that your honourable House will be pleased to adopt such other remedy for this great evil as to the wisdom of your honourable House may seem most meet. And your petitioner will ever most humbly pray.

"Feb. 21, 1826. WM. COBBETT."

Mr. *Hume* called the attention of the chancellor of the Exchequer particularly to this petition, since it afforded a practical proof of the necessity of the clause which he had proposed the other night, to compel the country bankers, by summary process, to pay in gold; for, unless some such provision was introduced, the excess of paper issues would be as great as ever. The bankers ought undoubtedly to lodge proper security for their notes; and it was not in the least unfair, that, upon three or four days notice, they should be compellible, by summary process, to pay them in gold on the spot.

Ordered to lie on the table, and be printed.

COMMERCIAL DISTRESS — PETITION OF MERCHANTS OF LONDON FOR RELIEF.] Mr. *Thomas Wilson* said, he never rose with greater anxiety to address the House than on the present occasion with a petition on a subject of vital importance to the welfare of the country, seeing that the performance of this duty placed him in the situation in which he was obliged to differ much from those whom it had formerly been his pride to regard as his hon. friends; but, whatever might be the consequence—whatever might be the impression unfavourable to himself in the quarter to which he alluded—when he witnessed the distress that every where prevailed, and was called on by his constituents to discharge the duty they had imposed upon him, he felt himself bound to stand forward. He trusted, therefore, that he should experience the indulgence of the House, while he was compelled to trespass upon their attention. The House knew, that not only the city of London, but the whole mercantile world, had been suffering, for weeks and months, under

the pressure of financial difficulties, which had brought many houses to the ground, and threatened destruction to many more. The merchants of London had solicited his majesty's government for relief, by an issue of Exchequer bills, as on former occasions of a similar character; and though he would make no comment on the manner in which that application had been received, yet he might venture to say, it was quite evident, from what had taken place, that his majesty's government had made up their minds to grant no relief whatever. Several objections had been stated on their part, to the course pursued by their predecessors. For himself, speaking as a practical man, he hoped he should be excused for saying, that on a great emergency like the present, that remedy would be found to be the most effectual, which had so proved at former periods of the same nature. During the discussion that had been going on, his majesty's government had found out that the charter of the Bank of England enabled that body to lend money on goods, and therefore they concluded, that any interference on their part would be highly improper, and would have the effect of perpetuating a series of precedents, calculated, in their ulterior consequences, to work great injury to the country. As by this discovery it had been ascertained that the Bank was open to the relief of the mercantile classes, why, it was asked, did they not apply to that body? What necessity was there for an issue of Exchequer bills under these circumstances? The answer he had to make on behalf of the mercantile classes was, that relief in one case was administered by means wholly unobjectionable; while, by the other mode, the affairs of the merchant must be subjected to an investigation which would completely expose his embarrassments to the Bank directors. The Exchequer bills would be issued under the management of commissioners sworn to secresy. A merchant who wanted an advance, not on imaginary security, but on real goods of intrinsic value, could, unknown to the world, apply to the commissioners, and thus overcome his difficulties, without the circumstance of his temporary embarrassment transpiring to any human being. The present idea, however, was, that if it was advisable to discount a bill, it was quite as easy and proper to obtain an advance of money on goods, indeed, that the latter course was less discreditable. No mistake could be greater. One transaction was sanctioned by time and custom. It was what occurred every day, and without it the business of the country could not go on. The other was a transaction that could not take place without bringing a slur on the credit of the individual having recourse to it. In the first stage of the discussion, the objection taken by government to afford relief, was directed more against the sufferers themselves, as sinners, than against the principle of relief itself. The merchants, manufacturers, and traders were treated as wild and profligate speculators; or at best, as men engaged in unreasonable adventures. They were described as being concerned in bubbles of every kind, railways, water-companies, and gas-associations; and it was said, that as by means of these speculations, and the consequent excess of trading, the country had been brought into its present state of distress, it was fit that things should be left to find their own level and that government ought, on no account, to interfere. As he wished to save the time of the conference, he had put the worst case that he thought it possible to conceive, and which yet he undertook to prove one deserving of relief. He had, therefore, stated the case of a speculator, who, though still owner of a good deal of property, had lost half he had possessed. Yet this individual, he contended, was worth saving; not for his own sake, but as forming part of the commercial community. So he would say of the sufferers generally. If not for their own deserts, they were yet worth saving for the sake of the country, to whose prosperity their welfare was essential. Passing over the connection that subsisted between the commercial and the agricultural interests, he would maintain the necessity of relief, on the ground that the distress—though he would not say it had been aggravated—had certainly been superinduced by the conduct of government, and therefore he would repeat, that the merchants, manufacturers, and traders had a fair claim of relief, considering all the circumstances under which the distress had been produced. As to the charge of excessive speculation, he had never gone into the subject before; but, when he was told that speculators did not deserve relief, and therefore that no relief ought to be administered to the existing distress, he would stand up for the merchants of the city of London, and, in

their name, deny that this was the case with them generally. They were not, as they had been represented, overgrown speculators. They did not deserve the imputations thus cast upon them. Before they were treated in this way, it became government to shew, that the difference in the price of consols had exercised no influence on the value of goods. Was the difference between consols at 95 and at 75, nothing? Had the fall in the price of government securities no effect in throwing down the value of goods? Was no allowance to be made to the merchant, on account of the change which now resulted from the proceedings of government, with the view of reducing the five per cents? There was no proof of speculation beyond what the circumstances of the times seemed to require. As to the excess of trading, with which the merchants were charged, it was easy now to throw the imputation in their teeth. They were accordingly told, that they had traded beyond their power and strength. But, how were they, beforehand, to arrive at this conclusion? How were they to know this result, till it had proved itself? When the trade opened with South America, who could say that five, or ten, or fifty cargoes, were too few or too many, of one kind of merchandize, before the market was actually glutted? At the same moment, too, goods were despatched, perhaps from London, from Liverpool, and from Glasgow, and this unforeseen union produced the over-trading. This objection had been pushed much too far against the mercantile classes. As to the mining concerns in South America, he differed widely from those who had attacked them. He was not in the House when some animadversions had been recently made upon them, or he would then have stated his opinion respecting them; but he had no hesitation in saying, that he considered them a legitimate employment of capital. If the government of Spain had been supported for so many years by the produce of the mines, it was surely not irrational to expect that these undertakings would, at the present time, yield a considerable profit; and, though the investment of capital in them might be a matter of inconvenience at this moment, there was no reason to apprehend that the result would not be greatly beneficial to the adventurers. The sums of money gained or lost by gambling in shares was altogether another consideration. He was not disposed to justify the practice of gambling in any shape, but it was obvious, that the sale of shares had nothing whatever to do with the present question. He perfectly agreed with the hon. member for Montrose, that the country had certainly not been impoverished by this gambling. One man was richer, and another poorer; but the whole stock of wealth was neither increased nor diminished. The question as to the South American mines was, whether the investment of capital in those undertakings was a legitimate speculation. He was perfectly satisfied that it was. One cause of the present suffering was said to be the excess of imports. The same remark was applicable to this, as to the question of speculation generally. The imports of a country could only be known to be excessive, when, by experience, they were found to be so. At present, the imports were excessive, only because the demand for foreign goods had suddenly fallen off. The loss resulting from the difference of prices would not be entirely sustained by this country. While the great importations were taking place, and while the prices of foreign merchandize were advancing, the prices of our own manufactured goods were also advancing; so that if, on one hand, we were importing at high prices, we were sending out our own manufactures, on the other hand, at prices advanced proportionally to the rise on the raw material. He did not stand up to recommend that assistance should be given to the dealers in bubbles of any kind, rail-roads, or gas companies, or foreign speculations, nor to the holders of bills of exchange of a long date, or difficult of negotiation. His proposition was simple. He wished that relief should be applied to that class of individuals who, with ample means, were suffering from the general want of credit and confidence, and who, he would add, were suffering to an extent which he would hardly venture to describe. No language could be used that would be too strong for the state of things to which it was to be applied. Every failure tended to aggravate the mischief and distress pervading the commercial world. Since the failure of the house of Goldschmidt, the consternation had spread in every direction. That house was deemed, like others, to have dealt too largely in foreign securities, and to have been concerned too deeply in over-trading. But, what was the fact?

That name, lately so high in credit and affluence, had, no longer ago than last summer, through one of the partners, then abroad, laid out 50,000*l.* in the stocks of the United States, in order to obtain greater interest on the money than they could procure by any investment in this country. They had also founded an establishment at Leeds, in order to assist the manufacturers of this country, and at the time when the house stopped payment, they had made advances to the extent of 45,000*l.* on the manufactured goods under their care. The course they pursued was this: If the goods were sold, the advance was repaid;—if not sold within a certain period, the goods were sent out to such part of Brazil or South America, as the manufacturer chose to point out. Of the 45,000*l.* advanced, 12,000*l.* had been in this manner repaid. But, what was the state of the country at this moment? Parliament might learn it from the affairs of this house. A communication received the other day from the head of the concern at Leeds stated, that he could not raise 12,000*l.* to support the credit of the establishment. Four days previous to the stoppage of the house, doubts having been expressed as to its stability, communications to that effect were despatched to Paris and Amsterdam. The alarm produced there, by this intelligence, was excessive. Advices had been sent over from both those cities, stating, that the mischief that must follow this event on the two exchanges, would be incalculable, and would ultimately recoil upon the merchants of London. In this way the distress, great as it was, would be aggravated by every fresh failure. Never was the truth of the old proverb more apparent—that delays were dangerous. Those hon. gentlemen who were acquainted with the city, knew what frightful reports were in circulation only yesterday, respecting establishments of the highest respectability and of known property. Yet, these mere rumours had driven down the price of the English funds two or three per cent, and the foreign funds four or five per cent. Among the inconveniences pointed out as likely to result from the granting of relief, was the evil of an excessive issue of Exchequer-bills. It might, he admitted, be attended with inconvenience, under present circumstances, to government, or the Bank, if Exchequer-bills were, to any great extent, brought into the market; but not treble the amount asked for would, under more favourable circumstances, produce any mischievous effect. If his majesty's government sympathised with the mercantile classes, all would be well; but not while they said, "Some of you have done what you ought not, and as we cannot discriminate between you, all shall suffer alike." This was hard treatment from a government which depended mainly on trade for the means of supporting its army, its navy, and its other great establishments. The conduct of his majesty's government was, in this respect, utterly unjustifiable. Perhaps it would be said, that he had overcharged the picture he had drawn, and he expected that severe animadversions would be made upon him for inflaming the public mind. He declared, however, solemnly, that he was discharging a most unpleasant duty conscientiously, to the best of his belief. Among the many painful feelings he suffered on this occasion, one of the most painful was that arising from the necessity of removing from the bench on which he had sat with so much satisfaction for so many years, to that sort of neutral ground on which he was standing. He had judged it more advisable to take up that position, than to go at once over to the opposition benches, where, possibly, he might have been looked upon as a spy in the enemies camp. The president of the Board of Trade had lately recommended to the House, that the balance of trade should be kept in view by the merchant, in order to regulate his proceedings. But he (Mr. Wilson) was one of the old school, of which it was a doctrine that the balance could be defined only by the result. The state of our foreign trade was now greatly altered. When our imports were chiefly from, and our exports to the continent, the balance of trade was easily adjusted. But now the supplies received by this country from the continent were much greater; and they would necessarily increase in consequence of the relaxation that had taken place in our navigation laws. The exports to the continent last year had been cramped by restrictions, but the great dependance of the country as to exports was on the trade with India, Brazil, and South America generally; and the returns in that trade could not be calculated until after 12, 18, or 24 months. As to the doctrine of limiting trade in order to force up the exchanges, he regarded it as one of the absurdities of the day. It must be left, he contended, to the Bank of Eng-

land to decide for itself, when it should extend or decrease its discounts. To say that the Bank directors should be compelled to watch the exchanges, and drive them up by contracting their discounts, was to inculcate a doctrine wholly at variance with the sound principles of trade. If it were to be acted on, he would say, "Good bye to the consequence, importance, and respectability of the mercantile establishments of this country." A favourite notion afloat at the present time was the necessity of putting the currency and trade of the country into a wholesome state. He readily admitted, that no object could be more desirable; but, if parliament was to begin this intended course of improvement by ruining some of the existing banking establishments, and inducing the rest, in self-defence, to shut up their shops, they would inflict calamities which they could not foresee on the country, already suffering excessively from the operation, perhaps unavoidable, of other causes. In his opinion, they should have let well alone. Government had committed themselves by a legislative enactment, in the circulation of country bank notes during an extended period. The right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer might now pay all the compliments he could invent to the country bankers; but he could not remove the stigma which was, at the opening of the session, fixed upon them all. On the part of the public there would be runs, and on the part of the bankers distrust.—He regretted that he had occupied the attention of the House at such length; but there were yet two subjects on which he begged leave to say a few words, mainly connected, as they were, with the causes of the present commercial distress—he alluded to the Corn laws and the Silk trade. He could not help considering these subjects, at the present time, as being closely connected with the actual state of country banking. If, at this period, government persisted in their intention of unhinging so many important interests, they would, in his opinion, adopt a dangerous system of legislation, which he trusted parliament would not tolerate. If the principles of free trade were to be introduced, government should at least pause, until they knew what were the feelings of the landed interests as to the proposed alteration of the Corn laws. The landed interest, after all, would probably turn round upon them, and defeat the grand design. What a state of confusion would there then be between wholesome and unwholesome principles jumbled together into a system, if it might be so called, which no man could pretend to understand. In conclusion, he had one or two words to say as to himself. If he had, in strong terms, advocated the measure of relief, he begged it might be understood that he had not advocated his own cause, but that of the merchants of London. He had no personal interest whatever in obtaining an advance of Exchequer bills; but he had heard and witnessed so much distress, that he could not avoid speaking in the strong language in which he had delivered himself. For the consolation of his majesty's ministers, and the country at large, he felt it his duty to say, that he did believe that the country was never possessed of more elements of prosperity, or a greater mass of substantial riches, notwithstanding the extraordinary, unnatural, and fearful situation in which it was placed, by measures pursued and by measures not adopted. There was property enough to answer every demand. All that was wanted was the restoration of confidence. The city of London, however, had sent memorials and deputations in vain. But his majesty's government, it appeared, had made up their minds to give no relief, and therefore the merchants were compelled to lay the statement of their condition before the House of Commons, and pray for redress from parliament. Before he sat down, he gave notice of his intention, on Tuesday next, to move for a select committee to inquire into the present distress of the commercial world.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that if the hon. member for the city of London anticipated from him any severe animadversions, either on the manner in which he had stated the case, on the mode in which he had described the distress, which they all knew was, unfortunately, prevailing in different parts of the country, or on his own personal conduct in bringing the question under the consideration of the House, expressing, as he had done, his altered sentiments on many important questions relative to the policy of the country, he would be greatly disappointed; because, sensible, as he was, that it was impossible the hon. member could address the House on the subject without feelings of the greatest pain, he trusted that the hon. gentleman would also do him the

justice to believe, that he could not address the House himself without similar feelings, naturally arising from that sympathy which every honest man felt in the distresses of his country. It would be a great injustice, therefore, to his own feelings, if he gave utterance to any remark on the hon. member's speech, which could, with propriety, be described as a severe animadversion upon it. When the hon. gentleman, the other evening, had asked whether it was the intention of his majesty's government to submit any proposition to parliament, following the example of two former occasions, he had felt it his duty at once, distinctly and unequivocally, to state, that, in the opinion of his majesty's government, it would be highly dangerous, if not fatal to the permanent interests of the country, to imitate, on the present occasion, those examples. He knew the course recommended by the hon. gentleman was sanctioned by the authority of great names. He knew he might be taunted with affecting to follow, though with humble steps, the policy of those great names, while, in fact, it would be said, he was departing from it. To that reproach, however, he would submit, rather than incur the danger which he foresaw must result from the measure to which he was now urged. If parliament were to adopt it, he should deeply regret such a determination—not as to the immediate effect of the measure, but with regard to the consequences that would not remotely flow from it. In these matters it was the first step which it was essential to avoid. If, because this measure had been adopted twice before, it was, therefore, to be adopted again, he could not see where the practice was to stop. On every occasion of distress, it would be called for, as, every time distress occurred, it would be represented as the most grievous calamity the country had ever endured. He objected to it decidedly on principle, and he would found his objection on the very arguments used by the hon. gentleman in its favour. He contended, that the proposed relief would unavowedly be, to offer a bonus to extravagant speculation. For what were the cases to which the hon. gentleman had referred? He had told the House of enormous speculations in cotton, wool, and other commodities, which, followed by excessive importations, had produced a dreadful depression of prices. If that were to be the ground of relief on the present occasion, what hope was the House to have that prudence would ever operate on the affairs of men? What was the description given by the hon. gentleman of the situation of the great house of Goldschmidt? He had never heard the particulars stated before; but, according to the showing of the hon. gentleman himself, surely, if ever there was a case of excessive speculation, that was the very case. They had locked up their disposable capital in the stocks of a foreign government thousands of miles off. The establishment at Leeds was not to execute orders in the ordinary way of business, but to speculate in getting commissions where they were, by sales, to have been obtained. Their whole establishment was conducted on a principle which was the very essence of speculation. But, ministers were said to be guilty of injustice; they were charged with attacking characters, and endangering the credit of stable and respectable houses, because they had expressed themselves freely as to the evils of the present state of things. But, it was the very nature of speculation, that the mischiefs it produced were not confined to the individuals who embarked in it. Was it to be laid down as a principle, that whenever general distress was produced by excessive speculation, his majesty's government were to step forward and administer relief? On all occasions was this to be the rule? If, indeed, he could believe that this was the last time relief would be called for, his view might be somewhat changed; but he foresaw clearly that if it was now granted, another demand of a similar nature could not be far distant. This would continue to be the case as long as parliament, on every fresh occasion, supplied fresh fuel for the fire of speculation. The hon. gentleman had referred to the power of the Bank of England to afford a relief, by lending money on goods; but he had, at the same time, expressed his opinion, that that was an improper measure to resort to. Now, what was the state of the law? By the charter of the Bank, by the act of parliament, creating and regulating that corporation, and by the bye-laws by which it governed itself, that identical mode of proceeding was clearly settled and pointed out. It might not be desirable, perhaps, to have recourse to it. Many reasons might induce the Bank to abstain from that course; but why was a new law to be passed, creating the government and people

into a sort of new bank for that purpose, when there was already an existing law, and an existing Bank, competent to do the identical thing for which a new law and a new bank were called for? Why were the members of his majesty's government to be loaded with every species of obloquy, because they would not create a new law and a new body, when there was actually existing a body by law, capable of giving all the relief expected or desired. He recollected well, that on the discussion of the law of merchant and factor, the argument used by the hon. gentleman in favour of the amendment of the law—and a pinching argument it was, which nobody could evade or resist—was, that, as the law formerly stood, it was impossible for any banker to advance money on goods. Parliament was convinced by this argument, and felt compelled to alter the law specially, for the purpose of enabling advances to be safely made on goods. If this amendment of the law was desirable, in order that bankers might have the power of making these advances, on what principle would parliament be now told, that it was utterly unjustifiable to refer the merchants to the Bank of England for the relief which, by its charter, it was competent to give, and which the amended law rendered it perfectly safe to administer? He could not comprehend why government was to place itself in the situation of a public banker, for a purpose that any existing banking establishment might effect.—He would not, on that occasion, follow the hon. gentleman into the subject of the Corn laws or the Silk trade; but he would revert to one point in his speech which confirmed him, if possible, more strongly than ever in the opinions he held as to the propriety of the course which government had adopted. He had heard with the greatest dismay, an argument used by the hon. gentleman on the subject of the currency and the exchanges; namely, that the Bank of England ought not to look to the state of the exchanges to regulate its issues, but only to what was termed the effective demand of the mercantile interests. If that principle was sanctioned by parliament, all that had been done to restore a wholesome state of the currency would be rendered completely abortive. Nothing in that case could prevent the recurrence of the desperate evils which had overwhelmed the country with all the calamities, from which no man knew how to escape, and which, he feared, it was destined for some time yet to feel. He besought the pardon of the House. He had, perhaps, expressed himself with more warmth than he ought to have done —certainly with less self-possession than the question required—but he hoped the House would do him the justice to believe, that any expressions he might have uttered, to which any gentleman might object, or any omissions of which he had been guilty, had not arisen from any want of sympathy for the unfortunate distresses which at present existed, or from neglecting to exercise the best energies of his own mind, or to avail himself of the wisdom of the more powerful minds of those by whom he was surrounded. He had endeavoured to express, to the utmost of his ability, the considerations which, in his mind, rendered it impolitic to adopt the course which the hon. gentleman had proposed.

Mr. *Baring* said, that no man could have listened to the right hon. gentleman who had just spoken, without being fully impressed with his perfect sincerity on the present occasion; nor did he require any assurances beyond those which the right hon. gentleman himself expressed, and which a knowledge of his character fully supported, that the distress under which so large a portion of the community was suffering, produced a large share of sympathy in his mind. But in stating thus much, he must also say that the whole speech of the right hon. gentleman convinced him that the right hon. gentleman was not fully sensible of the extent and depth of the existing distresses. And on this important subject, which was one more of understanding than of feeling, he trusted the House would not be carried away by the earnestness of the manner, or the perfect good faith of the character of the right hon. gentleman. He would readily admit that it was not the business of government to interfere in any ordinary case of distress, but a case might arise (and such was the present) where the distress might be of such an extraordinary nature, and so extensive in its operation, as to render it the indispensable duty of government to step forward and attempt its alleviation. It was most unjust to attribute disasters to the improvident speculations of the whole of these merchants. He, on the part of the merchants of the country, denied the fact. He believed, upon examination, it would be found, that nearly three-fourths of the absurd schemes which were

set afloat last year, had their origin, not in the counting-houses of the merchants, but in the inns of court—that they were concocted by some cunning attorney, or some scheming land-surveyor, whose only aim was to make money for the time being, by going before a committee of that House, careless to what the project might ultimately come. Some of those speculations might be traced to the more courtly circles of the west end of the town; and really, if the gentlemen of St. James's-street thought proper to bring their speculations to the merchants of the Royal Exchange, they had no right to say that the merchants of London alone were blameable. e did not mean to deny that many of those speculations had originated with that class of the community, but it was unfair to attribute the whole fault exclusively and entirely to them. As to the consequences which had ensued, he had never, at any time, hesitated to express his opinion that such must be the case; but, because he had ventured to predict that such consequences would ensue, he should not feel himself justified in turning round like the noble earl at the head of his majesty's government, who, because he had predicted, and no one would take warning, was for leaving the victims to their fate. Had it been the case of an individual, or of a particular branch of trade, perhaps he might say that it would be useful to allow experience to teach its lesson. But it was not that limited question; it was a question that embraced the country; that affected its leading interests, its revenue, its industry, its commerce, its manufactures, and its agriculture. The right hon. gentleman had stated no good reason why that remedy, which two examples had already proved the utility of, a remedy of known benefit, a remedy practised by the greatest man that ever administered the civil and internal affairs of this country—Mr. Pitt there was no reason why that remedy which had been found to work so well on former occasions should not now again be resorted to: for he firmly believed, that if all the cases of distress that had ever, in any former time, occurred in this country were to be summed up together, they would fall far short of equalling the mass of distress and suffering which at present oppressed the nation. That distress had at first sprung up from natural causes, but it had been grievously aggravated by the measures of government. What reason, then, was there for withholding similar assistance now, when it was well known, that the difficulties did not arise from any want of real substantial property, but from the cessation of the means of commercial intercourse, from the abstraction of the medium of circulation, and the destruction of that mutual confidence upon which our commerce depended? A general panic seemed to pervade every man's mind, that he would be unable to meet his engagements in consequence of the distresses of others. Every debtor had, as it were, his creditor at his throat. This, then, was surely a state of things peculiarly fitted for the interference of government; and the high estimation in which government paper and securities were at present held, considering the great depreciation which had taken place in other property, afforded an additional reason for granting the required assistance. But, it seemed that government had determined to adhere to a rigid, invariable, unbending rule, to listen to no practical men, but to be actuated only by abstract theories. They seemed to have altogether forgotten, that, in matters of even greater moment than the one now under consideration, we had been obliged practically to acknowledge the truth of the maxim, that necessity had not, nor could have, any fixed law; for, what was in estimation or in reality more valuable to a Briton than his personal liberty? Still, a state of things had more than once arisen in this country, when it had become absolutely necessary for a time to subject that most estimable right of Englishmen to the absolute disposal of the government. To a frequent interference by ministers in these matters, he had as great an objection as the right hon. gentleman could possibly have; but he looked upon this as one of those peculiar cases which required them to step forward and lend a helping hand to those who were now sinking under the pressure of distress. He was induced to think that the issue of Exchequer-bills would do more than any other mode which could be devised, for the relief of the present distress. The very ground and origin of that distress was a general want of confidence; and, because the measure he had alluded to was calculated to relieve the distress, and at the same time to restore confidence, he preferred it above any other. Persons who were in want of assistance would feel the greatest reluctance in applying for it to the Bank. In

order to procure it, they must make a statement of their affairs, and expose circumstances which their interest required them to conceal. Such an application, too, must be always disagreeable, and even in some instances disgraceful—he meant disgraceful to the mercantile reputation of such persons as were driven to make it. The applications, on the contrary, which might be made to the proposed commission, would be conducted with that privacy which was necessary to the welfare of the merchants, and being made upon oath, would afford the greatest possible security to the government. With respect to money being advanced by the Bank of England on the deposit of merchandise, he looked upon that expedient to be as objectionable in principle and as inconvenient in practice as could possibly be imagined. It might be true that the charter of the Bank empowered the directors to do so if they thought fit; but it was certain that they had not thought proper to exercise that power. Until it had been discovered just now, by the research of some industrious antiquary, nobody had been aware, not even the directors themselves, that any such power existed. And even if it should be asserted that they had, it was quite clear that they had never thought it wise or wholesome to exercise it. Any person acquainted with the nature of these affairs must know, that if the Bank should once adopt this measure, they would be called upon constantly to continue it. It would have the very effect which the legislature intended to prevent, by making them dealers in merchandize; for, although they were restrained from buying goods, they were empowered to sell in the event of the non-payment of their advances, and thus they must be, to all intents and purposes, dealers. He thought, too, that the complaint coming as it did directly before the House, it became them to provide some remedy for the distress which had become so urgent, and not to send the persons who were suffering under it from themselves to the Bank. With the greatest respect for the right hon. gentleman, he thought such a proceeding would be unsatisfactory and even unfair. The distress, it should be remembered, was felt not only in London, but had extended, and was rapidly extending itself, to all the other important towns and cities in the kingdom. He could see no ground of objection to compliance on the part of the government. An advance of Exchequer-bills would be most opportune. It would ease the pressure of distress, calm agitations, and restore mutual confidence, between the commercial classes. He was satisfied, though 5,000,000*l.* might be the sum required, that, as on former occasions, the issue of 1, or 2,000,000*l.*, at most, would be found sufficient to put the elements of prosperity into action. The principle had been acted upon with decided advantage; and there was no instance, he believed, of the application of it being attended with a loss of sixpence to the public. His hon. friend who presented this petition had done no more than represent the wishes and opinions of his constituents. He was glad to see his hon. friend take up what in military phraseology would be called an imposing position on the left flank of ministers. For his own part, he cordially concurred in the opinions he had expressed with so much good sense and spirit.

Mr. *John Smith* said, that in all that had been urged upon this subject, that which he took to be the most important point had been lightly touched on by his hon. friends: he meant the unprecedented nature of the distress which prevailed, and the mode which had been hitherto adopted for its relief. It was not his intention to inquire into the causes which had produced that distress—whether the panic which was its immediate cause had solely occasioned it, or whether the clumsy contrivances which had been suggested had increased it to its present extent. This, however, was quite clear, that the House was called upon to deal with an entirely new state of things. At this juncture the chancellor of the Exchequer had taken up the subject of the currency, and had proposed to do away with the circulation of one and two pound notes. He believed that the announcement of that intention on the part of government had had no small effect in producing the evils of which we had to complain. Was this to be renewed at some distant period? Was the House again to be occupied with debates on this subject? He hoped not. With respect, however, to the existing distress, he did not remember, nor, he believed, could any man living remember, a time of such universal pressure. Did any man recollect a period at which six London and an immense number of country bankers had broken?—when distress like that which now prevailed was felt at the same

time in London and at Manchester, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, and many other towns of the highest importance? It was very true that, some time ago, an absurd desire for speculation had existed throughout all conditions of the people. The noble earl at the head of his majesty's ministry had not been the only man to foresee the fatal consequences which must result from that rash spirit of speculation. He himself had expressed to his friends his firm conviction that some dreadful calamity would ensue; but he had in one respect been deceived, because he thought the distress would take place, not in the winter, but in the spring. It unfortunately happened, that the consequences of that calamity had extended themselves far beyond the persons who had been instrumental in spreading the mania for speculating. Many honourable tradesmen and most deserving individuals had been involved in the ruinous effects. Among those to whom he alluded the persons engaged in the silk trade were in the most unmerited and alarming state of suffering. Many of them had large stocks of silk, for which they had been obliged to pay, but which they found it impossible to turn to any account. In the present state of the trade, they durst not manufacture it; and even if they could have disposed of it, they could not have procured for it any price. Such a class of men deserved the warmest sympathy, because they had done nothing to deserve what they were now suffering. Day after day their bills were dishonoured, and they could see no limits to this time of pressure and dismay. A man of this description, who was possessed of 40,000*l.* worth of silk goods, had come to him that day, and said, "I have in my possession this property, but, I cannot go on, unless you will lend me some money." He, and those with whom he was connected, did so, and would continue to do so, as far as they could; but it must be obvious that no prudent man in these times, could do this to any great extent. He approved of the manner in which his right hon. friend opposite (Mr. Huskisson) had resisted all the attempts which had been made against the law which he had introduced on the subject of the silk-trade; but he wished it to be put into immediate operation, rather than wait till July next. He believed, that, so far from that measure having any injurious effect, it would, on the contrary, be a means of relieving the public. There could be no question that the Bank had a right to lend money on the deposit of merchandize, and in fact they had done so. This, he understood, was now objected to, and he was sorry to hear it. But although that was a measure which, under some circumstances, he thought highly expedient, he did not think it could be adopted so as to be universally useful on the present occasion. He preferred, on every account, the issue of Exchequer-bills, because the relief which they would afford would be prompt; and it was in the promptness of relief at the critical moment that its efficacy must consist. He could imagine no reasonable grounds on which ministers ought to refuse the request now made to them. What was there in it that they should hesitate to grant? It was true there were other modes in which relief might be afforded; to adopt them would require time, and while the grass was growing the steed would starve. He besought ministers to recollect, that the dangers which were now menacing the country were of no small importance. Without touching further upon this point, he would have the House to remember, that hungry men were not easily made to listen to advice, or to obey the laws by which they were, in times of less excitement peacefully governed. If such a state of things as that to which he could only venture to allude distantly should arrive, he knew that no one would regret it more than the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer. To avoid this the means seemed to be obvious. There could be no doubt that it was the duty of government to do whatever they could for the purpose of granting that relief which was imperatively called for. Before he sat down, he must say, that he could never understand upon what principle it was that ministers thought themselves bound to act. Some two or three years ago, unless his memory deceived him, a noble lord at the head of the ministry, from a speech which he had made, appeared disposed to believe that, even in case of absolute famine, it was not the duty of government to interfere to do away the evil, lest they should destroy that caution and care which the people ought always to have for their own protection and preservation. He could by no means concur in so general a proposition. He thought, on the contrary, that the conduct of government, on this and

on all other occasions, should be regulated by public utility. They were bound to ascertain, in cases where a request like the present was made, whether greater evils were likely to ensue from their refusing than from their granting it. If, on this occasion, they could show, that greater evils would ensue from their granting than from their withholding it, they should have his full concurrence. So wholly different, however, was his present impression upon the subject, that he was seriously apprehensive of the greatest evils, unless the relief prayed for should be granted without delay. He trusted, therefore, that the government, either by themselves or through their influence with the Bank, would afford this relief; and he hoped that the House would do him the justice to believe, that he would not have used the language, nor have uttered the sentiments which had been drawn from him on this occasion, but from a perfect conviction that they were such as the present exigency demanded.

Mr. *Pearse* observed, that if the directors of the Bank of England had withheld the relief which was so urgently required, it was not because they did not know and feel the difficulties under which the country laboured. Being, as they all were, either merchants or engaged in pursuits intimately connected with the commerce of the country, they were interested (speaking merely of their pecuniary interests) in removing, if it was in their power, the present distress. The reason which had induced them not to interfere to any greater extent than they had already done, was, because they knew, by experience, that much better means than any which they could put in practice had been devised, and which, in their opinion, were altogether free from objection. He would shortly state the reasons which induced him to concur in this view of the case. In the first place, the distress had extended itself throughout the country. There was no place of importance which did not feel its full share of calamity, and in the appointment of the commission which had been so urgently, and he thought so wisely, recommended to the adoption of the House, the same method of forming it should be pursued as in that of 1793, when persons were inserted to represent every part of the kingdom. One gentleman from Scotland, who was well acquainted with the interests of that country, which then had its share of suffering, was placed upon the commission, in order that its interests and wants might be ascertained and provided for. The same rule was observed with respect to other parts of the kingdom. The great advantage of this plan, when the distress was, as in the present instance, diffused generally, was too obvious to need any comment. The practice and knowledge of the directors of the Bank of England were necessarily confined to London, while the commission would have the best possible information respecting the whole country. Another advantage to be gained by the commission would be its great notoriety. It would convince the people that the legislature were interested in their distresses, and that they had busied themselves in the attempt to remove them. In this point of view more than in any other, he thought the commission would be highly advisable, and that it would produce the most satisfactory results. No issue of money from the Bank, to whatever amount, would have the effect that this measure would immediately occasion; because it would restore that public confidence which, although it had originated with the actual distress, had made that distress infinitely more dangerous and universal. The Bank had already done a great deal in all such ways as it could. It did certainly possess, as had been stated, the power to lend money upon the deposit of goods; but that was a permissive power, and the few occasions upon which it had been exercised, showed that it was not intended nor calculated to be frequently resorted to. The act expressly said, that the Bank should not purchase goods; but the very next clause empowered them, having lent money, to sell the pledged goods in case of their not being redeemed in due time. It was evident, therefore, that this power was not to be exercised excepting when some necessity required it. He could not imagine any objection, in practice, to the advance of Exchequer-bills by the government; and particularly at this moment, he was convinced that no other measure would be so advisable. This was the opinion of all the persons with whom he had the honour to act, and who had exercised the best of their skill and judgment in investigating the subject. The result of their deliberations had long ago satisfied them of this. The experience of the last four or five days had

served to convince them more and more, that this was the most desirable way of meeting the present crisis. The mere knowledge that the House had taken up the subject of the general distress, would have the immediate effect of restoring confidence. Without the issue of a single pound, a conviction that the commission was to be appointed would mitigate the sufferings of the country, and be the most effectual and wholesome cure for all the evils which were now universally felt.

Mr. *Bright* referred to the report of the commissioners appointed in 1793, and said, that the beneficial effects which had resulted from the measures adopted under that commission, were the best arguments that could be used for its renewal upon the present occasion. He did not know for what reason the government should refuse now to do that which had then been found so satisfactory a remedy for evils of precisely the same nature as the present. The commissioners of 1793 said in their report "that its advantages were evinced by a speedy restoration of confidence in mercantile transactions, which produced a facility in raising money that was presently felt, not only in the metropolis, but through the whole extent of Great Britain." He saw no reason why any doubt should be entertained that the same consequences would result, if the same measure were now put in practice. The commissioners further stated, that "the difficulties in which many considerable commercial houses were involved have been thus removed, and the fatal effects of those difficulties on other houses who were dependent on them have been prevented." Nor was the operation of the act less beneficial with respect to a variety of eminent manufacturers in different parts of the kingdom, who having, in a great degree, suspended their works, were enabled to resume them, and to afford employment to a number of workmen who must otherwise have been thrown on the public for support, and perhaps, in some cases, with the loss of the manufacture. We now heard complaints, that not only those who had rashly entered into the speculations which were so universally condemned were ruined, but that they had drawn into the same distress many honest and laborious tradesmen who had taken no part in their schemes. To obviate evils such as these, ministers were called upon to adopt an expedient, the efficacy of which had been already satisfactorily proved. Many manufacturers who had been obliged to suspend their works and to discharge their workmen would, by these means, be enabled to re-employ them, and that most important branch of the national interests with which they were connected would again be restored. Such distress as that which now prevailed—distress at once so extreme and so general—no man, he believed, had ever witnessed. It was vain to say that precedent did not justify this measure, or that it was contrary to the principles by which the government felt itself bound to act. The occasion was one of such urgent necessity, that it required no precedent; and principles, however valuable on other occasions, must give way to an exigency like this. But, said the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer, we must not encourage rash and unjustifiable speculation. He would not stop to inquire who it was that encouraged that speculation — whose speeches favoured that speculation, the knowledge of which they avowed, and on the success of which they congratulated the country—while they described the prosperity which was to be the consequence of them; but he had a right to complain, that ministers now quitted the course they had found so pleasant a one: that they turned round upon all they had done before; and, when a plan was recommended to them which would relieve the distress that had been increased, if not produced, by their own measures, they rejected it, and refused to listen to the counsel of men the best informed and instructed. The right hon. gentlemen now sheltered themselves under the authority of principle; and said, that whatever relief was to be afforded, ought to be granted by the Bank, over which (notwithstanding the censures which were heard respecting the connection between the government and the Bank) the right hon. gentleman said he had no such influence as was supposed. Why was not the power which the Bank was to have of purchasing Exchequer bills, not in the way nor for the purpose of their trade, a violation of principle? When Exchequer bills were selling at a discount, and men who wanted money were obliged to part with them at the market-price, the Bank stepped in, and raised the price to the certain loss of those who had been compelled to sell them at a large discount. Was the government to empower them to do this, and afterwards to refuse a mea-

sure which was for the benefit of the whole country, on the ground of its being contrary to principle? To quit this subject, and return to the expediency of the measure proposed—he would ask, why they should hesitate to do that which had been done before? It could not be denied that it was necessary that public confidence should be restored. The House was called upon to interfere to effect this; and even if what they now did should be followed by some slight inconvenience, still he was satisfied that the urgency of the present distress was such as would justify the measure. He disclaimed any interest in that measure, excepting such as every other member of the community must feel; and concluded by expressing his conviction, that unless the government should consent to the issue of Exchequer bills in the manner recommended, the distress must become more extensive, and the consequences such as every man must contemplate with dismay.

Mr. *Holme Sumner* concurred in the view taken on this subject by the hon. member who had spoken last. He was as great an advocate as any man could be for adherence to principles, as long as that was practicable. But, circumstances might happen to render it necessary to lay aside for a time those principles; and such circumstances he thought prevailed at this moment. The distress had assumed such a shape, that there was no class in the community exempt from its operation. No man, whether of high or low station, could say he was secure from the general pressure. It was true that one of the causes of this distress might be ascribed to the rash and unjustifiable speculations which had been indulged in. But the melancholy fact was, that the speculators no longer existed; they had been swept away in the general ruin; and those who remained and implored relief were not those who had thus sinned, but men of respectability, honour, and integrity, who had unfortunately become the sufferers from the operations of others. It was not, therefore, with a view of serving the speculators, but others who had no connection with them, that he joined in imploring relief; for there were not any classes of society—not even those who fancied themselves wholly beyond the reach of disaster of any kind—who might not be eventually dragged into the vortex of destruction, if something was not done to save those who were at present in danger. It was, therefore, for the House and his majesty's ministers to consider, whether something should not be done to stop the conflagration which raged at present in their neighbour's house, and might eventually reach their own.

Mr. *Monteith* said, that the distress which prevailed was by no means confined to England. It had reached Scotland, and was making rapid and alarming progress there. The city of Glasgow was at that moment suffering under distress as severe and universal as any other part of the kingdom. He valued the principles upon which the government acted so highly, that nothing short of absolute necessity should induce him to sanction any departure from them. But circumstances like the present left no option, and either the issue of Exchequer-bills must be consented to by ministers, or consequences of the most disastrous nature would ensue. On the other hand, it appeared to him, that by consenting to this measure, no possible injury, or even inconvenience, could be the result. He trusted that the representations which had been made would have their weight with the right hon. gentleman, and that an acquiescence in them would dissipate that frightful train of evils which presented themselves in prospect.

Mr. *Manning* expressed himself in favour of an issue of Exchequer-bills under commissioners by the government. A similar measure was adopted by government in 1793 with the happiest results—the distress at that time immediately subsiding. Government then proposed to issue Exchequer-bills to the amount of 5,000,000*l.*, but it appeared from the report of the commissioners, that they never found occasion to lend more than 2,200,000*l.* Originally, they were applied to for advances to the extent of 3,855,624*l.*, but the parties who applied found relief in other quarters; for, the moment it was known that government had authorized an issue of Exchequer-bills, assistance was easily procured in various quarters. Ministers in that House, and in another place, had thought fit to attribute nearly the whole of the present distress to the speculations in joint-stock companies, and other matters; but, on that point, he begged leave to differ from them. He did not mean to impute it as a matter of blame to ministers; but he must say, that much of the present distress had originated in measures adopted by themselves. He had

never, either in public or private, concealed his opinion, that the measures which ministers adopted for reducing the rate of interest on Exchequer-bills and other public securities were very impolitic. What had been the effect of those measures? Ministers complained of the foreign loans which had been raised in this country. What had led to them? It was the reduction of the 5 per cents to 4 per cents, and the reduction of the rate of interest on Exchequer-bills. In consequence of those measures, persons who had before derived moderate incomes from the funds were driven to invest their money in foreign securities, in which they had a prospect of obtaining 7 or 8 per cent. Ministers were aware that the Bank disapproved of the reduction of the rate of interest: they remonstrated on the subject, and stated, that great public inconvenience would arise from the measure. The Bank had been reproached with being instrumental in causing the present distress, by extending their issues of notes. It must be obvious, that there were occasions when it was necessary for the Bank to extend their issues; but he must say, after thirty years connection with that body, that he had never known an instance in which such an extension of issues had taken place but upon the best motives. When he stated, that the reduction of the rate of interest had led to the investment of money in foreign securities, he did not intend to blame ministers, but merely to show that they were not justified in attributing all the existing distress to speculation. A state of distress, such as no member of that House had ever witnessed before, had now existed for two months. During the continuance of that distress, the Bank had done every thing in their power to alleviate it. They had performed their duty, their bounden duty to the public. If they had acted otherwise, they would have deserved censure. The Bank, however, could do no more than they had already done. It had been said, that the Bank should look only to their own security, and leave the consideration of the interests of the country to parliament and the government. If the Bank had acted upon that selfish principle in December last when the two Houses of parliament were not sitting, and ministers, he believed, were all out of town, how greatly would the embarrassments of the commercial world have been augmented! From all parts of the kingdom—from all the great towns of England, Wales, and even Scotland—persons had come to the Bank to ask assistance, and that assistance had been most liberally granted. As a merchant, he was happy to second his hon. friend who sat near him, in calling upon government, as a matter of favour and grace, to take into consideration, in the interval between the present moment and the day on which the hon. member for the city had given notice of a discussion, the propriety of adopting the measure which had been successfully resorted to on former occasions, for the purpose of alleviating commercial distress. He did not wish them to give an answer one way or the other at that moment; but he trusted that they would turn the subject in their minds, and consider whether they ought to persevere in the course which they had commenced. Distress had now extended to merchants of every description. The warehouses were every where full. This was a state of things which called loudly for the assistance of government. Under these circumstances, he trusted that they would act upon the precedent of 1793 and 1811. It was obvious, that it must be extremely inconvenient for the Bank to go out of their regular course of business, and become the holders of goods in warehouse. They would not have the same remedy as government in cases of failure. He could assure the House, that it was from no want of desire on the part of the Bank to alleviate the prevailing distress, that they had resolved not to advance money on goods.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, he so far agreed with the hon. gentleman who had just sat down, as to consider, that, as this question was to be brought before the House on a future day, when the course of their proceedings would leave them to the further expression of their opinions by a vote—it was not desirable to proceed with this discussion on the present occasion; and more especially, as there stood upon the paper, for that night, the consideration of a subject of very great interest, and connecting itself, in some degree, with many of the topics which had now been brought forward, rather irrelevantly, to be sure, in the course of this discussion; but which it would be, for the purposes of a sound discretion, quite desirable to separate from those which the House was so about to enter upon. He could not, however, suffer a part of the

speech of the hon. gentleman who had just concluded, nor the speech of the hon. Bank director who had preceded the member for Lymington, and the tone of authority and admonition that they had both of them adopted, in respect of his majesty's government, to pass without some observation, and some explanation, on the part of government, of the principles by which they were actuated in respect of the proposed advances. He thought it fair to throw out of the question altogether the crimination and recrimination in which hon. gentlemen had thought proper to indulge, as to any alleged insensibility on the part of his majesty's ministers to the distresses of the country. It was a matter which had not been fairly raised that night; unless, indeed, it was meant to be said, that whoever were really sensible to the distresses of the country, were bound to adopt, without examination, and against conviction, whatever remedy any individual might propose to administer for those distresses. It was most unfair to infer from any hesitation on the part of government to adopt any particular remedy, under such circumstances, that there existed, therefore, on their part, an insensibility to the extent or nature of the existing evil. "For myself," continued the right hon. gentleman "and for my colleagues, I totally disdain to answer such insinuations. I impute to no man, who now hears me, that he is insensible; but, Sir, for others to impute to those upon whom, every day and every night, care and anxiety are brought by the consideration of those distresses, in addition to the common sympathy in which they share as men, is to impute to them, not only a want of feeling, but a want of sense, which would unfit them, not merely for the situations which they fill in the government of the country, but to appear here, in the midst of those whom I have the honour of now addressing. Why, Sir, the present situation of the country, as to these distresses, is afflicting and alarming; but the whole question in which the hon. member for the city of London, and other hon. gentlemen have brought before us, is, not whether the state of the country be alarming and afflicting, but whether the particular remedy which they suggest ought to be adopted by government, without previous examination, and against the judgment of those on whom it is proposed to throw the task of propounding it to parliament, of explaining its details, and of vindicating its propriety. If any man will think but for a moment how much easier it would be for us to give in to this proposal, at once—if, considering this (as the hon. Bank director said) merely a fair measure for parliamentary consideration, under circumstances of great public distress and difficulty, we were disposed to popularize, by sanctioning a measure of this kind, can it be doubted by any who hears me, that it would only be necessary for my right hon. friend to stand up in his place and say, 'My judgment remains unshaken and unaltered; but I yield to the current. I see that there is a combination of opinion against me; and notwithstanding my own remains unchanged, I will yield to the torrent which sets against me.' That would be the language which my right hon. friend would be justified in holding, under the circumstances I am supposing: but I say, Sir, that if it were possible that my right hon. friend could hold it, he would decidedly desert his duty. He would desert the duty which, as a member of parliament, he owed to his constituents, and to the country in general; and he would violate the weighty trust reposed in him, as a member of the government, by acceding to that, as a popular expedient, which his deliberate judgment had taught him to reject, as being in itself prejudicial to the interests of the whole community. As an individual member of parliament, called upon only to discharge the ordinary responsibilities of his situation, he might, perhaps, with the same conviction, have yielded to the urgent necessity of the case, and abandoned what he conceived to be the strict line of his duty, when assailed by the strongest sense of misery, supported with all the eloquence of distress; and he might so have yielded, without any reflection upon the justice or propriety of that course which the circumstances of their situation had forced him to adopt. But, as a responsible minister of the Crown, called upon to bring forward a proposition of relief—to carry it through this House—to adopt it as one of the measures of his policy—to fight for it now and hereafter, against all the objections which may be brought against it—for even now although the wish seems so unanimous, objection will be brought against it from some quarter—and hereafter to contend against all the accusations which might be the consequence of either its failure or its success—why then, I say, Sir, that if

his judgment is not convinced of the thorough propriety of the course which has been recommended, it becomes his duty to waive every other consideration, to persevere in his determination, and leave to the parliament of the country to adopt such measures as to them may seem expedient, and to place measures which he does not think it right to sanction, in hands more capable of carrying them into execution. Now, Sir, in our opinion, there is but one proper remedy for the distress; I say plainly and openly but one, and that is, the exercise of the power vested by charter in the Bank to make advances upon the security of property or merchandize, to those who may require them. The Bank directors, however, say, as indeed the hon. member who spoke last reminded us, that the power is in an imperfect degree—that it is not sufficient for security—that, in short, it is not an imperative, but only a permissive power. And yet, Sir, the Bank of England—I hope the hon. director will admit that—lends money on mortgages, buys gold and silver, and makes advances upon bills of exchange, and other like securities. Will it, then, be said, that the power of lending on all these, is not a power which extends to other commodities capable of sale? Why, Sir, the act of William and Mary expressly mentions merchandize as one of those things upon which the Bank was permitted to make advances, when it obtained its charter; and there remains not a shadow of doubt upon my mind, that the power to make advances upon that kind of security, is no more a power exclusively permissive than the power to lend money upon the security of bullion. The words of the act are: 'Provided always, that nothing herein contained be construed to hinder the corporation of the Bank of England from dealing in bills of exchange, or in coined gold and silver, or in bullion, or merchandize, which may have been bona fide deposited with them as a security for advances.' Can it, then, be denied for a moment, that the power here mentioned is not as much an imperative as a permissive power? I say it is. I say, as far as the sense of the legislature can be gathered from the words of this act, that the power is precisely the same as that upon which the Bank makes its issues upon any other description of property, and that the making advances upon merchandise is as much in the discretion and power of the directors, as upon mortgages or bullion. Undoubtedly it is in the power of the directors of that company to say they will not; and they have said they will not. They have refused to make advances upon those deposits which may be offered to them, and have called to-night upon his majesty's ministers to supply that assistance to the country which they refuse, upon grounds, of which it may be said, stet pro ratione voluntas, but which, I contend, they have full power to grant, when required. We have considered it our duty to deny the assistance claimed from us; and it will remain now to be determined, what means are left to meet the exigences of our situation. It has been said, not only by the hon. bank director, but by almost every one who has taken a part in the debate, that the application upon this occasion is supported by a series of precedents, commencing with the year 1793. I say, Sir, that, independent of the question, and whether we are right or wrong in our refusal, the granting of this assistance of Exchequer-bills would be altogether a new measure, and that, as far as regards the precedent of 1793, it is only applicable at all in the existence of the distress. But, Sir, I would draw a distinction not only between our present situation, and the time of 1793, but between it and all the others; and it is this, that we were called upon to make advances to the distressed in a time of war and during the reign of the Bank Restriction act; and until we are placed again in the same situation, we must not be told that, we are to follow a precise precedent. The distinction, Sir, is always to be taken. Not that on no possible occasion the government should again lend money to relieve the distresses of the commercial interests; but when they are called upon to do so, there should be the same union of political contingencies which on that occasion formed both the reason and the justification for so extraordinary a departure from general policy. But, Sir, no man seems to consider the strange condition in which the country was unexpectedly placed, in passing from a state of peace to that of war, at the time of the precedent alluded to. In the year 1792, when Mr. Pitt brought forward his budget, no language could be more pacific than that which he then addressed to parliament and the country; and yet, in a short time after, without the slightest warning, without any

apprehension on the part of those engaged in our commercial transactions, we were on a sudden engaged in an extended war. I do not mean to cast the slightest reflection upon the reputation of that great statesman. No man respected his character when living, or venerates his memory when dead, more than I do; but I wish to show how little the country was prepared for such a transition; that those engaged in its commerce could have had no foresight of the events which were to plunge them in distress, and that the great and unexpected changes and reverses which then took place, were the result of circumstances totally different, and gave rise to claims essentially more imperative upon the compassion of the government, than those, however lamentable or extensive they may be, which have been created in a time of peace, the most profound which the world has witnessed for half a century. It does not, therefore, follow, because his majesty's ministers do not adopt the measure which has been suggested to them, that they have not considered. On the contrary, they have considered it deeply and anxiously. That consideration, however, does not lead them to an abandonment of the course which they have laid down, and which they are determined to pursue. In adverting to past transactions, and to what have been regarded as precedents parallel to this period of distress, I do so only with a view of negativing the effect of those precedents, as applicable to the present time. If the course now recommended by some, was adopted in every future case of emergency, and every pressure, even of less general distress than the present, this course would be pleaded as a precedent; and, if such a case should occur in five or six years hence, there would be no reasonable ground for resisting the importunities of those who might require it. It might, to be sure, be more agreeable to yield to the arguments, or rather the desires of those who recommended a departure from the line of conduct marked out by ministers. It might be, perhaps, the road to popularity. But convinced as ministers were of the wisdom of not departing from it, they would persevere, regardless of the censures with which they may be visited by some, and of the admonitions so liberally proffered to them by others. Let it not, Sir, be supposed that relief will be precluded by government not acceding to the measure now recommended to its adoption. The Bank has the power of administering relief in the way that I have pointed out, and that power stands upon the same footing as the discharge of any other of its functions. They may act as they think proper, and there is no person to call them to account. It has been said, by the hon. member for Medhurst, that although this power is vested in the Bank to advance money on goods, there is a great disinclination on the part of the Bank to act upon it. It is said, that merchants are not disposed to go to the Bank for assistance. Why not? For the life of me I cannot see why such a disinclination should exist. What is the ordinary course of proceeding between merchants and the Bank? It is usual for the Bank, in ordinary cases, to discount the bills of merchants. These bills are the connecting link between the Bank and the holders of those bills. They are 'the visible and outward signs' of property on which the advances are made. But now a chasm has occurred in this species of security. It is true, that as the Bank have the power of making advances, they have also a discretion to exercise in the manner in which they make them. But I am utterly at a loss to know why there should be any shyness on the part of merchants in taking their bills of parcels or their invoices to the Bank, which would be a substantial foundation of property; and on their depositing these, advances might with propriety and safety be made upon them. There is one facility in effecting the measure at the present time, which did not formerly exist. Before, the goods on which the advances were made were scattered all over the face of the metropolis and of the country, so that it would be almost necessary for the Bank to have an establishment, in order to keep an eye upon them. Whereas, at present, the goods on which advances would be required are warehoused under the king's lock and key, and it only required to transfer the key in the door, to effect a transfer of them. Under these circumstances, I own I can see no reason why advances should not be made by the Bank, and required by the merchants. There is one point to which, as it is a personal one, I wish to advert, before I conclude. It was stated by an hon. bank director, that during the pressure of severe distress his majesty's ministers were out of town. It was stated, that in the month of December last we were absent. Now,

I can only say, on the part of my right hon. friends on my right and on my left (Mr. Peel and Mr. Huskisson), and my right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, and myself, that we were then in town, and that we were at our posts day and night, constantly and anxiously engaged in deliberation upon the distresses of the country, and the best mode of relieving them. We were then in town, when the hon. director was in the country; at least, if he was in town, we did not see him on any of those occasions when we had the pleasure of seeing his brother directors; and I can appeal confidently to one of those gentlemen (Mr. Pearse), who, I am sure, will be ready to bear testimony to the anxious solicitude then evinced by his majesty's ministers; I can appeal to him to testify that there was no want of disposition—no want of zeal—on our parts, to render whatever assistance was in our power: nor were we backward in rendering those acknowledgments which we thought were due to the conduct of the Bank at that momentous crisis."

Mr. *Pearse* disclaimed the use of any tone by the Bank which would amount to an admonition to the government. They had merely represented, that as the mode pursued in 1793 had operated so beneficially, it would be advisable to adopt the same course now.

Mr. *Robertson* said, that the conduct of ministers, and the measures introduced by them, were loudly condemned by the country. They had proved themselves unfit for their situations. The opinion and feeling of those within and without doors were, that they had reduced the country to a most helpless condition [Cries of "Question!"]. Such was his opinion of their conduct, and he would not be deterred from stating it. It was usual, when ministers found that their measures were not approved of to resign their places to those whose counsels were acceptable to the nation. Their continuance in office was an embarrassment to the king; who with other ministers, might adopt measures more applicable to the situation of the country.

Mr. Alderman *Bridges* concurred in all that had been said with respect to the strong claims which the unexampled pressure of the present crisis gave to the commercial world for relief. He could not understand why a measure which proved so successful in 1793, should not be resorted to at the present moment. The causes and consequences of the two periods were exactly similar. Such was his grave opinion, and such was the conclusion to which a hundred merchants of London, after the most mature deliberation, had come to. In 1811, government afforded relief by an issue of Exchequer-bills, though the distress was not then so great as at present.

Mr. *Curteis* contended, that the precedent of 1793 was a very fair guide as to what the government ought to do in the present case. The Bank directors were all men of practical experience, who understood the nature of the distress better than any body else; and, as they advised the government to come forward with assistance, he was inclined to think that they were right. It was true that the recent measures of ministers had been cheered by their opponents; but those cheers ought to be looked at with some jealousy. He was one of their friends, as he generally voted with them, except when they got into their novelties. Whatever mischiefs might arise from their new doctrines of free-trade, he could not be looked upon as a particeps criminis as he had invariably opposed them.

The petition was then brought up and read, setting forth, "That the House has, in former instances of extraordinary pressure amongst the mercantile classes, sanctioned an issue of Exchequer-bills for the relief of the commercial and manufacturing interests of the British empire; that the petitioners beg leave to approach the House with a respectful expression of their opinion that the unexampled distress which at this time prevails amongst a very large portion of the merchants and traders of the city of London, and of various other parts of the United Kingdom presents an irresistible case for the immediate interposition of the legislature; and the petitioners are therefore of opinion, that an issue of Exchequer-bills, in such amount, and under like regulations, as have been adopted upon former similar occasions, will not only afford essential relief to those who are now suffering under temporary commercial embarrassment, but will operate in a most important degree to restore that confidence in mercantile transactions which has been recently suspended, and to which the distress which now exists is chiefly attributable; that the petitioners, being deeply impressed with these sentiments, humbly

pray that the House will be pleased to take the premises into its most favourable consideration, and afford such relief, by the issue of Exchequer-bills or otherwise, as in its wisdom may seem meet."

Ordered to be printed.

Silk Trade.] After various petitions against the importation of Foreign silks, from persons engaged in the silk manufacture, had been presented to the House,

Mr. *Ellice* rose, and spoke, in substance, as follows:—

—I am sure, Sir, it is unnecessary to preface the statement which it will be my duty to submit to the House, in support of the motion of which I have given notice, by an appeal to its patience and indulgence. The numerous petitions on the table from every branch of our Silk manufacture would be at all times entitled to our serious and deliberate attention; and however much I may feel my own inability to do justice to the case of the petitioners, I am greatly supported by the general sympathy that exists for their distresses, and the anxiety that prevails in all quarters, to grant any relief that may be compatible with other paramount considerations, and interests. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the cause of their present distress, there is unfortunately no want of proof of its intensity, and the severity with which it bears on a large class of the population: and it is from a conviction, that it is the duty of parliament to accede to the prayer of the petitioners for further inquiry, before we decide on adopting the alterations, which the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade has given notice it is his intention to propose, in the laws affecting this manufacture, that I am induced to press their representations on the House.

Before proceeding to the merits or details of this question, I wish, in the first place, to advert to some accusations that have been thrown out against me, in previous debates, as being willing to take the first opportunity of deserting, from some supposed pressure from without, those principles which have lately characterized our legislation affecting the general commerce of the country, and of which I have always professed myself a supporter and advocate. I might appeal to the right hon. gentleman opposite, for his testimony of the sincerity of these professions, and he must, at least, admit there has been no want of zeal on my part, either in the committee up stairs from which these measures emanated, or in my place in this House, in endeavouring to remove the prejudices opposed to us, or in giving such assistance as I was capable of affording, to those plans of reform, and amelioration in our foreign trade, which have reflected so much honour upon his administration, and conferred such benefit on the public interests.

After the country had emerged from the late arduous and protracted war, during which our commerce, while labouring under all the disadvantages of a vicious system of regulations and restrictions, had been carried to an unexampled height, by the success of our navy, and by the almost entire destruction of the foreign trade of the rest of the world, a full and minute examination into the merits of that system, became essentially necessary, that every advantage might be given to our merchants and manufacturers, in the competition they were to expect on the return of peace. To the proceedings of the committee appointed to inquire into this subject, the opposition of interested parties was of course to be expected. The cry of "let well alone," incessantly urged against what were called rash experiments and inconsiderate innovations, assailed us from all quarters. We were not told, however, by those who raised this cry, what other means, than the removal of the prohibitions and restrictions impeding the free course of our foreign trade, they proposed, to maintain our commercial superiority, which had grown up under a monopoly, when that monopoly had ceased to exist. But while every reasonable man agreed with the right hon. gentleman, as to the justice of his principles, and expediency of their immediate adoption, in all cases where great injury would not result to considerable classes, and even to individuals, from establishments having been formed and protected by an opposite policy, the greatest caution was yet essentially necessary in their application to the complicated interests of many essential branches of our commerce. The first direction in which we had to look for immediate competition was in our navigation and foreign trade, and I have given my unqualified support to all the measures of the right hon. gentleman, to encourage and extend these main sources of our national prosperity and security. The next object, though not second in importance, was, to endea-

your by degrees, and with the most deliberate care, to apply the same principles to the various branches of our internal industry; and here I differ materially with the right hon. gentleman as to the course he has pursued. Although I have always admitted, to their utmost extent, the difficulties Government must have to contend with, in carrying into full effect the act of 1819, for the reformation and adjustment of the currency, and in proposing to parliament the repeal, or amendment of the Corn laws: still these should have been their first measures, and preceded any attempt to remove protections, by which particular branches of our manufactures, and especially those most connected with our export trade, had been fostered and encouraged. If parliament had not, to satisfy the landed interest in 1822, shrunk from a firm perseverance in the bill of 1819, for the restoration of cash payments, prices would have been gradually reduced to nearly a level with those of other countries, whose circumstances are in any respect analogous to our own. Moderate and steady prices would have enabled the right hon. gentleman to deal with greater facility with the Corn laws, and a more equal and steady demand and remuneration for labour might have followed. The next step should have been a revision of the principles and system of our taxation. We should have endeavoured to relieve the productive industry of the country, by removing all duties, and taxes bearing particularly upon it, substituting in their place, taxes upon the wealthier and unproductive parts of society. It is unnecessary, with reference to the present discussion, to enter into the question of the partial bearing of particular taxes on different classes of our own community; but, surely, no doubt can exist as to their effects on the cost of the production of those commodities, for which we depend upon a foreign consumption. I do not mean, Sir, to state, that nothing has been done in this respect, or that which has been done ought not to be taken as an earnest of the determination of the right hon. gentleman to persevere in the general application of his principles to our whole system: no person is indeed more anxious than I am, that this, for his own credit, should be the result of his unremitted labours in the office he so ably fills. With our superior capital, the acknowledged and increasing intelligence, energy, and industry of our population, who can doubt its ability to maintain, on equal terms, a competition with manufacturing rivals in other countries? But, Sir, you must first place it on that equality. The public burthens must be reduced, and free permission given to exchange the produce of its industry for that of its neighbours, on terms of fair reciprocity. Without these advantages, every step taken by the right hon. gentleman for the partial application of his principles may be detrimental. If he will take the trouble to inquire, he will find even our own colonies in America supplied with some articles of manufacture from the United States; that the woollen manufacturers in Silesia and Germany are treading fast upon us; that an active competition is rising in every quarter; and he can have no doubt of the vast superiority of the French and Swiss, in the manufacture now under our consideration. With the right hon. gentleman, I say, "freedom of trade," and that the removal of shackles and restrictions is the best and only adequate policy to meet the exigencies of our altered situation. My objections are only, that he begins where he ought to end; that the course he has pursued may oblige him to retrace his steps in particular cases, and that in the conflict of interests this may occasion, the country may lose the benefits that would result from a cautious adaptation of these measures, successively, to different interests, and from a steady perseverance in them. Nor, Sir, is there a single objection urged in the petitions on your table, against the principles of free trade. The petitioners only pray, "the House will inquire, whether there are not grounds for suspending, for a season, and at this particular crisis, the operation of partial experiments, affecting their interests, which, if unaccompanied by other measures, may aggravate their present distress, and, in their opinion, expose every branch of the silk manufacture of this country to the greatest peril."

In the first place, Sir, the petitioners complain, that the act of 1824, for finally removing the prohibition against the importation of foreign silks in July next, was passed without sufficient inquiry, or information, as to the consequences that must ensue from so sudden an alteration. No department of our internal trade has probably occupied so much of the time or attention of the legislature as this manufacture, since its first introduc-

tion and establishment in this country. Upon reference to your Journals, numerous instances will be found, of the appointment of committees, consisting always of the most distinguished members of this House, to inquire into, and report upon, different measures of regulation and protection, proposed, from time to time, for its improvement and advancement. I will not stop to inquire whether the means so devised were those best adapted to the attainment of the end in view. They at least prove the anxiety and solicitude of Government and Parliament to give every encouragement that could be suggested to the application of capital and industry to a new species of manufacture, in which we had to contend with the superior skill and experience of other countries, where it had been previously established, and carried to a high state of perfection. It had been described with justice, in some respects, as an exotic plant, but certainly it was the only extensive branch of manufacturing industry, in which our great political, and commercial rivals, had attained, and I am afraid still maintain, an admitted superiority. It had been reared gradually in this country, under the encouragement of a strict monopoly; to the protection of which monopoly the petitioners ascribe its progressive prosperity, and the important station it was found to occupy among our staple manufactures, on the return of peace. On the appointment of the committees of both Houses, on Foreign Trade in 1821, this case, as involving the consideration of one of the most extensive of our existing monopolies, was the first taken up by the committee of the Lords. Evidence was gone into, and considerable information obtained; and the present law, founded on their lordships' report, was the result of that inquiry. The petitioners then offered all the opposition in their power to the projected alteration, but were at last bribed into an unwilling acquiescence by the two years allowed them for preparation, and the expectation held out, that other measures would be adopted, before the expiration of that period, to place them, in respect to taxes, and the price of provisions, on an equality with their French and Swiss rivals. But still they warned the legislature, "they were proceeding on slender evidence, to justify such hasty and important changes." The only witnesses examined on the comparative expense of manufacturing in this country, and the continent, were two American merchants, who estimated the difference at about 30 per cent, or at least found a difference to that extent in the purchase of silk manufactures for the supply of their own market. I do not deny, Sir, that much good has resulted, that the public and the petitioners themselves have largely benefitted by the spur applied by the apprehension of this threatened competition, and that our manufacture has improved beyond precedent in the last two years. This was to be expected from the repeal of the duties on the raw material; but much is also to be ascribed to the more general intercourse, and greater means of procuring information as to the management and mode of conducting the trade in France. The petitioners now only pray, "for a little time for further inquiry, and improvement, before you determine to expose them incautiously to danger, which may be either much diminished, or entirely removed, by the delay of one or two years more. They desire to communicate to the House better, and more direct evidence on all those points, than could have been procured by the former committee; to submit to your consideration much important knowledge, as to the state of machinery, means of supply, and charges on the manufacture in France, and, above all, to direct your earnest attention to the still more interesting view of this case, as connected with our Indian and China trade."

Having stated the general objects of the petitioners, and the grounds on which I feel myself justified to press upon them the consideration of the House, I will proceed, Sir, to lay before you such further details and information, as, I trust, will induce the House, at least to refer the whole subject again to a select committee. The petitions on the table are from every branch of this important manufacture, and from persons whose interests, in many respects, are opposed to each other. Still all coincide in regarding precipitate alterations with apprehension and dismay. The throwster, the dyer, the manufacturer of broad and narrow silks, have each their case: and, although I fear I shall trespass on the time of the House, I must endeavour to state the objections they respectively urge, to what they conceive a rash, and dangerous interference with the growing improvement, and prosperity of their trade.

The Throwster complains, in the first

instance, and with reason, looking only to his separate interest, of the sudden and unexpected reduction, in the duty on the importation of foreign thrown silk. This had been settled in 1824, at 7*s.* 6*d.* per pound, as a fair protection; and, although it was evident so high a duty would be found ultimately incompatible with justice to the manufacturer, when all restriction was removed from the importation of foreign goods, still, the trade was little prepared for the sudden reduction of a third, by order of the Treasury, without notice, and without the previous sanction of parliament. The House, too, should recollect the precise moment chosen for this alteration; when all manufacturing industry was paralyzed, and this trade was in a state of the greatest depression, the warehouses being overloaded with immense stocks of goods, for which there was no demand, and to the loss on which, occasioned by other causes, this reduction of duty was superadded. What justification could the right hon. gentleman urge for this measure, or more particularly for its infliction on the trade at such a moment? Or, how are persons in business to conduct their affairs, if government be to exercise a discretionary power of this description, according to their caprice, without due notice, and without considering the sacrifices entailed by such material changes on individuals? It may be true, that a reduction of the duty at a proper season was indispensable, and that general notice had been given to the throwsters, that at some time or other, government would be obliged to propose it to parliament; but certainly they have good cause of complaint against the right hon. gentleman, if their statements are correct, and I hope he will satisfy the House better than he has hitherto been able to satisfy the petitioners of the paramount necessity for this sudden alteration. With the exception however of the manner and time, I agree entirely with the right hon. gentleman as to the principle and policy of a reduction; but, in fairness to the manufacturers, if these measures should be persevered in, reduction must be carried still further; and then let us examine the representation the throwster makes of his case. In the first place, he cannot, or ought not to complain of the inferiority of his skill and machinery. On the contrary, I find no where in these petitions any allegations of this description. His complaint is confined principally "to the price of labour," which is the gravamen of the whole case. While this exists, he asserts, and desires to prove, "that the remaining protection is totally insufficient, that the capital invested in mills, and machinery will be entirely annihilated, and that the apprentices he has employed will be thrown on the parishes, to add at this crisis to their burthens." Are these statements admitted or not? and if denied, would it be an impolitic course, in the present feverish times, to expose the exaggerations imputed to them, by examination before a committee?

Then comes the petition of the Dyers, who have also fair cause of complaint against the right hon. gentleman, not for his sins of commission, but of omission in their case. While he applies his principles of free trade, in permitting the importation of foreign goods, he forgets to remove the oppressive duties on various articles used in dyeing, and which put all chance of fair competition out of the question. Two principal articles used by dyers are soap and barilla. On the importation of the former, for be it observed we are now discussing the merits of free trade, not those of the excise revenue, a duty of 4*l.* 10*s.* per cent is levied, being at least twice the value of the commodity, and amounting to an absolute prohibition. On barilla, an extravagant duty is specially imposed, for the protection of the coarser article of kelp, raised on the northern counties of Scotland, and defended on this especial ground by the vice president of the Board of Trade, the zealous advocate of his Highland constituents. On several other drugs, a list of which I hold in my hand, and which it is unnecessary to enumerate, the duties are equally indefensible. But I can have no doubt the right hon. gentleman, seeing of how little importance these duties can be to the revenue, yet of how much consequence to this branch of the trade, and to the success of his general measures, will prevail with the chancellor of the Exchequer to relinquish them altogether. The Dyers, like the throwsters, maintain, that their skill, and such machinery as they require, are quite equal to such as the French employ. The climates of Italy, Switzerland, and France, may be more favourable for particular details of their operations, but these are comparatively unimportant; and French workmen brought to this country, to assist in improving their colours, and other processes in dyeing, have

admitted their own inferiority to English workmen, in many essential points. But, Sir, let the petitioners speak for themselves, and the right hon. gentleman, at least, will not find fault with the grounds and principles on which they rest their opposition to his proceedings. They say, in the petition now on your table, "Your petitioners would not for a moment feel alarm about competition, if their burthens were less heavy, if Englishmen were, in point of expense, placed on a footing with the foreigner; for your petitioners have no hesitation in saying, that in point of industry, and for ingenuity and colours in the art of dyeing, they do not fear competition with any nation upon earth. But, while every article of life bears so extravagant a disproportion between England and other nations, your petitioners humbly submit, that the Operative of this country is not in a condition equal to meet those fearful odds that are to be hereafter brought against us." It is unnecessary to add one word to this expression of the feelings and opinions of these petitioners. The right hon. gentleman will find in it the whole essence of the question under our consideration.

I come now, Sir, to the more numerous petitions on your table, from persons of all classes and conditions employed in the manufacture of broad silks and ribbons, and who have hitherto enjoyed a monopoly of the supply of those articles in our home market.

The material points for examination by a committee, as connected with the broad trade, are, whether the proposed duty of 30 per cent is a fair and sufficient protection, when the monopoly is destroyed, and whether there is a reasonable probability of our being able to enforce so high a duty, when the great impediment to smuggling transactions, the power of seizing foreign goods under the present prohibition, when exposed for sale, is given up. Although I may differ ultimately with the opinions of the petitioners on both points, I think the statements they now make, and the evidence they are prepared to adduce in support of them, entitled to the most serious and deliberate attention of this House.

I have before said, the principal evidence on which the former committee proceeded, was that of two American merchants, who had some experience of the relative cost of silk goods in France and in this country; and the House was further encouraged to adopt the bill of 1824, by the unhesitating confidence then expressed by certain manufacturers of Manchester, of their ability even to compete at that time with the foreign manufacturer: Among the petitions on the table, praying you will arrest the progress of these measures, is one of considerable weight and ability, from these same persons engaged in the manufacture at Manchester, and their arguments, which I will not repeat, in favour of caution and inquiry, are entitled to the greatest consideration. Nor will I go into all the calculations that have been made from actual purchases of goods in France, and comparisons of their quality with that of others manufactured in this country. It is only necessary to refer the House to the printed papers circulated by the committee of manufactures at Weavers Hall, and by that most respectable and able gentleman Mr. Doxat on this subject. Some of these statements make the cost of manufacturing plain goods in this country 44 per cent above that in France, and considerably more on figured and fancy articles. If this be true, how is such a difference to be accounted for, and if it be not an exaggeration, and the difference cannot be reduced, of what use is a duty of 30 per cent, leaving still an advantage of 14 per cent to the foreigner, on the lowest quality of his manufacture? But if the case is so with respect to French goods, how infinitely do we find it aggravated when a comparison is made with Indian and Chinese silks? At the last sale at the India House, goods of this description invariably sold for less than the price of raw silk, added to the duty and expense of throwing; and this with the prospect of the ports opening for their admission to home consumption in July. Would 30 per cent in this case be sufficient, or was it possible, with any chance of being able fairly to collect it, to impose a greater duty? But other considerations arise from this statement. One of the great objects of the right hon. gentleman was so to encourage this manufacture, as to lead us to hope for an extension of it by an export trade. To the direct imports from India and China, have been added others from America, where no market could be found, even at low prices, for Indian and Chinese silks. What hope, then, can we have of selling similar goods to a profit, which cost 50 or 70 per cent higher? And this remark ap-

plies to all the markets of the world, seeing the exportation of these manufactures is made without duty or restriction. Are the prices of Indian manufactured silks, then, unusually low? Do they remunerate the manufacturer in India and China, who has the raw materials at hand, and labour at a rate proportioned to the wants and maintenance of the people of these countries? Or is it calculated, that the additional demand on the English market—for I have stated they are not even required at their present value in any other—will so raise the price, as to enable us to compete with them? And if so, in what proportion will they displace our goods in our own consumption, and what effect will this have on our manufacturing population? Are these not questions worth inquiring into, if only to satisfy the petitioners, and allay the alarm, well or ill grounded, that has spread abroad on this subject? Samples of French as well as Indian manufactures, can now be laid before a committee, and the calculations on which the petitioners have proceeded be verified, or the errors of them detected and exposed. The House will also recollect, that for the protection of the throwster, a duty is still to be left on Italian and French thrown silk of *5s.* per lb. This amounts to at least 7½ of the 30 per cent, leaving only a duty in favour of our manufacturer of 22½ per cent, instead of the protection of 30 per cent held out to him. Is this to be permanent? If not, when is it proposed to make a further reduction? And would not inquiry be expedient, with a view to adjust these points, with the least possible injury to the parties interested in the decision? Before the duty was increased on raw silk, no such protection was considered necessary for the throwster. In 1766, the duty on raw silk was *9d.*—on thrown *1s. 9d.*—a difference of only *1s.* What circumstances have since arisen to justify the additional *4s.*, or to give such colour to the representation of the throwsters, that even with this protection, they may be obliged to abandon their occupation?

Beyond all the difficulties urged by persons concerned in the broad trade, there are others peculiarly affecting the narrow trade, or ribbon manufacture. This part of the case, if any credit be given to the representations of those interested in it, would appear so strong, as almost to justify some exception in their favour, if the House shall support the right hon. gentleman in opening the ports for the admission of other silk goods in July. I am almost afraid of being accused of deliberate exaggeration in stating the enormous disadvantages under which the petitioners affirm, they must enter into competition with their French and Swiss rivals, if no greater time be allowed them for preparation; but I desire particularly not to be held responsible for the correctness of those statements, which it is my anxious wish should be thoroughly sifted and examined above stairs. Nay, Sir, I will go further, and express my fervent hope and expectation, that we should have to convince the petitioners of the fallacy of some of their calculations, and that much of their alarm and apprehension is, if not entirely groundless, greatly over-rated. But still I must admit, these statements come from most intelligent and respectable persons, who have taken great pains personally to examine into the details of their manufacture, as it is conducted in France and Italy, and who make out a primâ facie case not easily resisted, and which, if I mistake not, has rather surprised the right hon. gentleman and the Board of Trade. In all the other branches of this manufacture, the petitioners ascribe their inability to compete with the foreigner, principally, if not entirely, to the difference in the value of labour, the heavier amount of burthens and taxes and the increased price of provisions, which, while they continue to operate on the rate of wages, must necessarily maintain that difference against our countrymen. But neither the throwster, the dyer, nor the broad-silk weaver complain of their inferiority in skill and machinery. In the narrow trade, and particularly in light fancy goods, and gauze ribbons, not only does the amount of labour bear a quadruple proportion to the value of the manufactured article to that in the broad trade, but the superiority of the French and Swiss looms has been ascertained beyond all doubt, and can be proved to a degree that would astonish the House. Much has been done within the last two years in introducing improvements; and time and encouragement are alone wanting to give confidence for further application of capital to this most important object. One workman can now produce, with the improved engine loom lately adopted, six-times the quantity of ribbon he could have before manufactured in his common single-hand-

loom; and it is a melancholy consideration, and one eminently deserving the serious attention of the House and his majesty's government, that fully three-fourths of the looms still in use in Coventry, to which place this manufacture is almost entirely confined, are of an inefficient description, and by far the greater part of them, the property, and it is sadly to be feared the only property, of the operative weavers themselves. Their buildings and houses are adapted to this machinery, and must be altered for the reception of the engine looms, which require more room and greater height; and in the present depressed state of the trade, and the apprehension of the immediate introduction of foreign goods, the weavers are unable, and the manufacturers unwilling, to invest money in alterations which may only increase their difficulties, without some assurance of adequate protection. If you tell the petitioners, as I have often endeavoured to impress upon them, there could be no great risk of the foreign manufacturer being prepared with an additional stock, equal to our demand, at the outset of this new trade, and at the low price at which they state he is able to make his goods; they answer, there is as much capital invested in the ribbon manufacture in the town of Basle alone as in Coventry alone; that the manufacturer there enjoys an exemption from those fluctuations of credit and paper, which cause so many periodical convulsions in this country; and that we are proceeding in utter ignorance, if we suppose his means of production are not adequate to any additional demand that can be made upon him. The manufacture in Switzerland consists principally of plain silk and satin ribbons, and employs, according to the statement of the petitioners, about 10,000 engine looms, all constructed on the most improved principles, 3,000 of which, it is alleged, are sufficient to produce an adequate quantity of these articles for the consumption of Great Britain. They further state, that upwards of 12,000 of the same looms are in use in St. Etienne, St. Chamond, and the neighbourhood of Lyons, in the manufacture of fancy and figured ribbons, 2,000 of which would amply supply our whole consumption of this species of goods. If these statements be correct, and if the cost of manufacturing be so comparatively cheap as the petitioners offer to prove it, will 22½ per cent, the duty proposed, making allowance for that still retained on thrown silk, be a sufficient protection? or what inducement can our manufacturers have, to invest further capital in a trade exposed, as they maintain, to so hopeless a competition?

Another point well deserving our attention, with reference to this part of the subject, is the state of the law relative to patents and patent rights. In the course of their inquiry into the situation and circumstances of the foreign manufacture, some of these individuals have discovered material improvements in the construction of machinery, in the invention of which they have no merit, but for which they have obtained patents on the usual petition, stating they had procured information from the inventors abroad, and desired the protection of a patent for introducing their discoveries into this country. In two recent instances connected with the narrow silk manufacture, such patents have been obtained; and if the improvements be to the extent and of the importance represented, it might be desirable to grant some remuneration to the proprietors, and throw them open to the trade. One is for the machine well known on the continent by the name of its inventor, the Jacquard loom. The other for a loom for weaving velvet ribbons and bindings, and which, by a most ingenious process, actually enables one weaver to make forty-eight times the quantity of those articles, he can in the common and very inferior single-hand loom now employed, and which is the only machinery hitherto applied in England to this particular department of the manufacture. Both the models of these improvements have been exhibited to the right hon. gentleman, and I suppose he has desired some inquiry and report to be made by competent persons of their merits; but the monopoly of them by individuals in this country, while their use is open to all persons abroad, is an additional embarrassment to our manufacture. This subject should be canvassed and settled, while such great alterations in our commercial system are under discussion; and I am sure the House will agree with me, that some check should be imposed to the issue of patents, to persons merely copying or adopting the inventions of others, and which may, as in the present instance, greatly fetter and cramp improvements in our trade.

I have now, Sir, gone through the principal allegations in the petitions on the table from the manufacturers concerned in the different departments of this important branch of our industry, and the House will be able to judge, whether there is sufficient ground laid for the motion of which I have given notice on their behalf. I wish again and again to press upon their consideration, that with an open trade, no greater protection can be given, without entirely sacrificing the throwster, than about 22½ per cent. You will at the same time observe, the smuggler obtains an inducement to continue his operations to the extent of the full 30 per cent, and the greater part of the risk of seizure will be removed by his being enabled lawfully to expose his goods for sale. I do not press these facts and arguments in favour of the eternal continuance of the monopoly. I should resist that as strenuously as the right hon. gentleman, but they are entitled to great weight in deciding the question, whether longer time ought not to be given for preparation. I will further state a decided opinion, that in the end it will be found impossible to maintain the duty to the extent now proposed, without sacrificing the revenue to the smuggler; and that all protection of this kind held out to our manufacturers must be illusory, beyond such moderate duty as can be collected with certainty and facility.

But, Sir, the more serious and important subject for the consideration of the legislature still remains behind. I have hitherto confined my observations to the petitions from the manufacturers. The throwsters have their particular grievances; and any person acquainted with the present state of the trade, must be entirely satisfied, however much he may differ with them as to the causes assigned for their distress, that they are not overstated. The dyers state plainly and intelligibly the only difficulty they have to contend with; the manufacturers represent, in possibly exaggerated terms, their alarms and apprehensions; but all these individuals, with the exception of the throwster, whose mills and establishments are of great value, can easily quit a losing trade, and turn their capital to some more profitable branch of industry, or send it abroad to be still engaged in this, under more favourable auspices and circumstances. But if the facts, or any portion of them, which I have laid before you are true, what is to become of the more important class, the labouring population, engaged in this manufacture, if you rashly interfere with the limited employment they now have, or do not remove those clogs imposed on their exertions and industry, by your taxation, and laws affecting the price of the necessaries of life? They are not deficient in patient industry, in skill or intelligence; the climate gives them certain advantages over the artizans in warmer countries; and what is it, then, I would ask the right hon. gentleman, which compels the manufacturer to present to us such a striking contrast between the cost of production in this country and in others? Is the present rate of wages an adequate remuneration to the operative weaver? Look to the state of the population in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, in Macclesfield, in Coventry, and in the other districts where this manufacture is carried on, for evidence on this subject—in almost every case reduced to a state of unmerited deprivation, or deep distress. The right hon. gentleman will tell us this is the unavoidable consequence of our speculation and over-trading last year, about which a word or two by-and-by; but certainly it is not imputable to any ordinary fluctuation in trade, or more especially to any fault of the poor people themselves. Is some inquiry not necessary into the peculiar burthens affecting them, before you run the risk of increasing their already intolerable privations? and might it not be safer to endeavour, in the first instance, to abolish the monopoly in corn, and to adopt such other measures as may tend to place them, with respect to the price of the necessaries and comforts of life, on a footing with the population of France? See the wide difference that now exists in this essential point, and which is only the creation of our wars and taxes since 1792. From a statement published by the secretary of the Congleton committee, and which I use, merely for the purpose of easy reference, without going into the details, it appears, that house-rent, meat, flour, butter, cheese, coals, milk, and potatoes are all more than double the price that they were at that period. The ports were open for the importation of wheat in 1792, when the price was 50*s.*, at a duty of 2*s.* 6*d.* They are now open at 80*s.*, and with a duty, above 70*s.*, of 12*s.* But has the

foreign artizan the same changes and circumstances to contend with? Prices in France and England did not vary much, except from occasional depreciations in the currency of either, for 200 years before 1792. In 1825, we find them in France nearly as they were before the Revolution. In England double! How long does the right hon. gentleman suppose a competition in trade and manufactures can go on, with this appalling difference in the condition of the people? and is he of opinion there is no risk in these violent alterations in our existing system, without he has some assurance of being able to place our labouring population, with respect to the means of maintenance, and existence, on an equality with those with whom he calls upon them to contend? or are we, without caring for their daily and hourly demoralization to embark in this hopeless competition, paying the same wages as in Lyons and Basle, and sending the poor weaver to the parish, for such addition from the poor-rates as the overseer may consider necessary to keep him and his family from actual starvation? We witnessed these scenes in the cotton manufacture in 1818 and 1819, and boasted afterwards of an export trade, in which we made a present to the foreign consumer at the rate at which we supplied him of the greater part of the real cost of production. While we were selling our goods at half their cost, our superior capital and machinery had credit for the destruction of the infant manufacturing establishments on the continent, where they could not understand by what process we could derive profit from our sales. But while we deceive in this way the rest of mankind, we forget we are practising the greater deception on ourselves. It is perfectly true that much injury has been done to other countries, by the frequent revolutions that have taken place in our currency and prices since the peace; but the evil has been felt in a ten-fold greater degree at home, and will in the end aid the other causes in operation, all tending, if not checked with a strong hand, to the destruction of our manufacturing and commercial greatness. We must always recollect, we have not been the only rich and great commercial community in the world; that our ascendancy rose on the ruin of the trade of other nations, whose decline was owing to the causes now threatening ours; and the right hon. gentleman, as it appears to me, would direct the attention of the legislature, and the powers of the government much more beneficially in a manly endeavour to remove these causes than in partial attempts to apply his principles, when the experiment, unaccompanied with other measures, may be attended with so much risk, and so great an addition of positive suffering to large masses of the people. He tells us, and there I entirely agree with him, that the greatest part of the present distress in this, as in all other branches of our industry, arises from the reaction consequent upon the over-trading of the last two years, and that it is idle to ascribe any material portion of the depression in the silk-trade, to the apprehension of any considerable import of foreign goods in July next. But my difference with him is, first, as to which party is to blame for this over-trading. Government, or our merchants and manufacturers? and, secondly, whether the precise moment to be chosen for such an experiment in a particular branch of manufacture, is one, when two-thirds of the population engaged in it, are entirely without employment, in a state of absolute destitution, and the other third working at half wages, and threatened with a similar fate? He may say, recollect what passed on the close of the discussion on this subject in 1824. The trade generally, and I then agreed in opinion with them, were willing to come to a compromise for the two years, after the duty was repealed. The right hon. gentleman, on that occasion, misquoting, and misrepresenting, but which I am sure he did unintentionally, Mr. Hale's evidence before the committee, urged it as one of his main grounds of belief and expectation, that the English weaver would be able to maintain a successful competition. The sanguine calculations of his Manchester friends could not even brook the delay then conceded. We have since had two years' experience. Call these witnesses again before a committee, and ask them their present opinion, on the relative state of wages, and condition of the operative classes in the two countries, with the additional information they have since obtained. Then, as to over-trading, it is easy for the right hon. gentleman to use the argument when it suits his own purposes; but I have observed an unusual shyness on his part, and on that of his right hon. friend, the chancellor of the

Exchequer, to meet the question fairly, to examine dispassionately and coolly the great causes of this pestilence, and to inquire what persons are justly accountable for the present disastrous condition of all the trading interests of the country. Let us look back a little to the tampering with the currency, the alternate issues and contractions of paper, and the expedients which have been resorted to for the maintenance of our revenue since the peace, and we shall see, at once, the foundation of all our distresses. In 1816, we were to restore our metallic circulation, and, with the necessary contraction of paper for that purpose, came embarrassment and difficulty. In 1817, tired of that policy, the ministers had recourse to loans from the Bank and new issues. With the consequent temporary prosperity, came new taxes, and a determination, as it was called, to support the credit of the country by an efficient sinking fund. In 1819, finding it impossible to reconcile our issues of paper, with a sound circulation, the philosophers again set to work, and decreed, we should collect the increased taxes in a doubly enhanced currency. Then came deeper distress than on the former occasion; and when this fell on the land in 1822, as it always inevitably must do, although at a later period than on trade, we adopted, without hesitation, the old remedy. The country bankers were encouraged to resume their old habits of paper-making in perfect confidence. Prosperity, as it is called, again followed. And does the right hon. gentleman, or his right hon. friend near him, so soon forget who it was that assured the country the prosperity of that day was real, and must be permanent? If others had participated in, or been deluded by, their opinions and encouragement, they, of all persons in the world, are the least entitled to accuse the dupes of their time-serving and wretched policy, of acting without sufficient caution on this mistaken and false view of the affairs of the country. Who forcibly reduced the rate of interest, and, by ruinous expedients of loans of paper from the Bank for fictitious sinking-funds, paying off those public creditors who refused their reduced interest, and deferring the burthen of what has been called the dead weight, so increased the temporary abundance of money, as to produce the unparalleled and unprecedented engagements for foreign loans, and the disgraceful speculations of the last two years?

And that this charge may not be made slightly, let us come to facts within the knowledge of every man. There is no such accurate test of the operations of government in these matters, as the state of their account with the Bank, and that is always on your table. In 1819, when it was at last finally, and with so much wisdom, determined to restore the ancient currency, the debt to the Bank was nineteen millions. The committee, on the representation of the directors, came to a decision, that it was necessary to repay ten millions of this amount, so as to reduce the balance to nine. Will the House believe, that, after being reduced, according to its resolutions, to nine, it has been since increased by the transactions I have described, and now remains subject to the reduction which has been lately agreed upon at twenty-five millions? For the truth of this statement, and the figures, I refer to my hon. friend, the member for Taunton (Mr. Baring), whose calculation I have adopted; and after having submitted it to the House, I will ask, whether any possible doubt can remain as to the party really to blame for all this over-trading and speculation? What was the stimulus to the before unheard-of, and insane projects, so unworthy our former commercial character? The rest of the world, made rich by your loans, by money pressed upon them in this way, and which it is always so easy to spend, became your customers for manufactures and articles of luxury, which their own means never enabled them before to consume. Your manufacturers called in new hands to provide the additional, and as they were taught to expect permanent and growing demand for their goods. Beyond supplying the actual consumption, the foreign markets were over-loaded, according to the uniform course of such matters, in expectation of good sales and returns from a continuance of this hollow prosperity. Suddenly, the philosophers of 1819 find out, all they have been doing since 1821 is wrong. The currency must be immediately and forcibly contracted, to bring back into circulation, the gold you have been scattering so lavishly on all sides, and your foreign debtors, who were relying upon further accommodation, are pressed for repayment of your former advances. The scene changes, as if by the wand of the enchanter. The goods abroad are unsaleable, returns are obtained with extreme difficulty for those previously disposed of, and

generally only in colonial produce, which sells, in your enhanced currency, for one half its former value. All industry is checked and paralyzed—first, your merchants, next, your manufacturers, become bankrupts—the people employed by them are thrown on the parish, and then the only consolation they receive is, that they must take upon themselves the consequences of their own indiscretion, while his majesty's ministers turn their attention to other experiments, which, according to the opinion of the petitioners, may have no better result.

I am aware, Sir, these observations apply more to the general and foreign trade of the country, than to the silk-manufacture. It is not dependant on a demand for export, nor in fact can any over-trading be imputed to the persons engaged in any branch of it, except the throwsters. But I know, from what has passed elsewhere, that the dupes and victims of the system that has brought this nation to the brink of a frightful convulsion, will, for the purposes of this debate, be charged as its authors and abettors, and I am bound in duty to shield them from such unjust accusations. Whatever may be the ultimate result of those measures, it is not improbable, that the silk-trade, confined to our own consumption, and independent of foreign demand, may rally more rapidly than many of our staple manufactures. That is certainly my opinion. The stocks of manufactured goods are far from being large. The apprehension, just or groundless, of a considerable importation on the opening of the ports, has deterred the manufacturers from increasing them, and the present suspension of employment in Spital-fields and Cheshire tends to the diminution of the usual supply. The spring trade is always the best; and it must be recollected, the consumers of this expensive luxury are not among those who suffer most from the peculiar distresses of the times. I state this, Sir, to show I do not participate in the general gloom and despondency that appear to prevail amongst all classes of the petitioners; and who should recollect, unless we are to place entire credit in the ability of France and Switzerland, to supply a large additional demand, as represented by the ribbon-manufacturers, there can be no danger of immediate interference, to any extent, with their home trade.

I am afraid, Sir, I have exhausted the patience of the House, and performed very inadequately to the petitioners, the duty they have imposed upon me, of submitting their case to your consideration. I fear, also, from the manner in which their former representations have been received by government, I have to expect the decided opposition of his majesty's ministers, to any review, or reconsideration of the measures adopted in 1824. And if I could bring myself to concur in the opinion of the lords of the Treasury, as expressed in their secretary's letter to the country deputation on the 28th of December last, that "their lordships have never entertained the belief that any importation of foreign goods was likely to be made to such an extent as to interfere with our own manufactures, or in any greater degree than might be sufficient to supply, in a legal manner, that portion of the consumption which is at present derived from the fraudulent introduction of foreign silks," I might also be disposed to object, to any further, because useless discussion, of this question. I have stated distinctly, in the outset, my accordance with the general principles of the right hon. gentleman, and that I am no advocate for the interminable, or any very protracted maintenance of the present monopoly. Nor indeed, Sir, have I finally made up my mind, whether it is necessary or expedient to grant further time, or if further time, whether to all, or any particular branches of the trade. My apprehensions as to the partial application of the principles of free trade go much beyond their effect on the silk-manufacture. Without a reduction of taxes and the abolition of your Corn laws, or rather the substitution in their stead of the regulations of 1792, I fear the right hon. gentleman will be compelled to pause in his proceedings, if not to go back, not because his principles are, or can be wrong in the abstract, but because he wants the power to apply them generally in a state of things which has grown up under different and entirely opposite regulations, and I need not explain to him the risk, to which such a necessity would expose the ultimate adoption of a more wise and rational system of commercial administration. As one of the zealous supporters of such a system, I pray him to be cautious, and surely I may again urge, if there be a case requiring the greatest forbearance and caution, it is that of a trade, in which as an exception to all others, we are still,

on the whole, confessedly inferior to other countries, and where we have to look for all improvement, to their instruction. Many prejudices, and much error, and groundless apprehension, have been removed by the previous inquiry, and the experience of the last two years. If we do not succeed in satisfying the petitioners, by the further inquiry I now pray the House to grant them, we shall at least have credit with the public, for proceeding with that deliberation which the importance of such a case deserves, and disarm the opponents of all improvement and reform, who are ever on the watch to accuse us of inconsiderate rashness, and neglect of existing interests, in our attempts to ameliorate, and improve the institutions of the country. Above all things, Sir, I entreat the House to look round, and reflect on the particular crisis at which this appeal is made to them. Our commercial interests exposed to a frightful convulsion. Our currency unsettled. On the eve of some attempt to alter and re-model our Corn-laws. The manufacturing population in a state of unparalleled distress, imputing, and with reason, all their sufferings to bad policy and misgovernment—I cannot, under these circumstances doubt the wisdom, or see the danger, of acceding to the prayers of the petitioners, that you will grant them a further inquiry, before you determine to adopt the final measures for the regulation of this trade, of which the right hon. gentleman has given notice; and I therefore move you, Sir, for the appointment of a Select Committee, for the purpose of referring to them the petitions on the table, that they may examine and report their opinions, and such observations thereupon, as may guide the House in their further proceedings on this most important subject.

Mr. *John Williams* rose to second the motion of his hon. friend. He began by observing that he had always understood it to be desirable, that if a doubtful measure was to be discussed at all—and a doubtful measure he considered this to be —it should be discussed at a period when the tranquillity and prosperity of the country were such as to prevent the danger and risk which such a discussion might produce. That such was not the present state of the country, he believed no man would venture to deny. The greater part of our manufacturing population were undergoing a degree of suffering unparalleled in our history. His hon. friend had made an allusion to the distresses which existed in Macclesfield. Now, he would beg the attention of the House, while he stated a few additional facts relative to the distresses in that district. He wished to inform the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Huskisson), if he was not already aware of the fact, that the misery and distress existing in that town, great as they were, were likely to be aggravated ten-fold, unless a check was given to the measures by which those evils were caused. The House was not, perhaps, generally, aware of the rapidity with which the population of Macclesfield had increased under the ancient and erroneous system of our Silk trade. In the year 1780 the population of that place amounted to 4000 persons. In 1826, its population had swollen to 23,000 persons. He was not aware whether the right hon. gentleman thought this too rapid an increase of population, and that famine and disease should be allowed to step in and thin their numbers, and keep the peace. He would now say a word or two as to the amount of employment given to that population in the silk trade alone. In the year 1825, he found that twenty thousand hands were there employed in the various branches of the silk manufacture. Of these, there had been thrown out of employ, in consequence, as they state, of the operation of the right hon. gentleman's measure of free trade, and this, too, in the last half year, no less than 8,731 persons, leaving in employment, or rather in half employment, nearly 14,000 persons. He wished also to state, for the right hon. gentleman's information, that there were in Macclesfield alone, 1,600 families supported by voluntary contributions: those persons were supported solely upon oatmeal and potatoes; but even that subsistence was likely soon to be taken from them, as the fund from which it was derived was exhausting, and would in a few weeks be at an end, so that that number of families must fall, for subsistence, on the poor-laws. He had been informed by the mayor of Macclesfield, that that gentleman had, before he came to town upon this distressing business, signed no less than eleven orders of removal, in order to throw upon the land a portion of the burthen caused by those distresses; as if the land had not been sufficiently burthened before, without including the numbers of Irish who were passed along, and becoming a daily bur-

then to the country. The distresses of that district were hourly increasing, and there was no hope for relief; because no hope of employment could be entertained, so long as there prevailed an apprehension of the introduction of French silks.—He had also obtained some details with respect to the state of the silk trade in Manchester, and he would confine himself to the broad-silk trade, as the most favourable case for gentlemen opposite, because in figured silks the labour was greater, and consequently the dread of foreign importations greater. In the Spring of 1825, there were 10,688 silk-looms at work, and in January last there were but 4,110 looms employed, making a reduction of 6,578 looms; and the proportion of looms going out of work would go on rapidly increasing, unless the cause of the existing alarm was removed. He found, notwithstanding this reduction in the number of looms, that, at the time of the calculation, 24,000 persons were employed in the silk trade in that district. In the parish of Bethnal Green, no less than 1,000 silk-workers, of various kinds, were sustained by parish relief, and it was said that the numbers were daily increasing. But, notwithstanding the extent and variety of this distress—notwithstanding the probability of its increase, and the certainty that a portion of the population must be driven to ruin and despair—notwithstanding all this, he would not oppose the measures of the right hon. gentleman, if he would show to him the great countervailing benefits they were to produce in the country. Let him but prove this—let him but show to that House, that benefits would be derived to the country greater than the evils which it was suffering, and those which were apprehended, and then let him, by all means persevere in his measures. But he called upon the House to pause, and wait until they had before them some proof that those benefits would be produced. He implored them, in the mean-time, to weigh well the complaints and the apprehensions, of the suffering manufacturers, before they gave their assent to those theories which were considered injurious, but which the right hon. gentleman showed his consistency by a determination to persevere in. It was their duty to have full and clear evidence before them, before they took a course which would have the effect of bringing the most serious and lasting evils upon the country. He did not assert that the right hon. gentleman was wrong, but he did assert that there was sufficient in the distress which existed, and the alarm excited, to call for the strictest inquiry. It was their duty to give the petitioners an opportunity of proving their statements, and of pointing out the grounds of their alarm. The whole of those distresses had been attributed by the right hon. gentleman and others to the spirit of over-trading and over-speculation, which had seized upon the manufacturers, as well as upon almost all other classes of society. That was, he believed, the right hon. gentleman's theory. And how did he propose that the evil should be cured? He believed, by leaving all to the natural course of things. But did not the right hon. gentleman perceive how this must aggravate the distress, by compelling the manufacturer to sell his stock at a loss, in order to get the superabundant stock out of the market, and regulate the supply to the demand? But, if the petitioners could make out that even this would not bring about a return of the demand for the manufactures, then he conceived they would have established their right to a further inquiry. He was not authorised by the silk manufacturers to admit that they thought their distresses had arisen from over-trading or over-speculation. They thought quite the contrary; but he would, for argument sake, concede that such was the case. But to the point. How did the demand for manufactures come round? The stock of manufactured goods in the market was to be found in the hands of the warehouseman and the merchant; both of whom applied to the manufacturer as they wanted to add to the stock. This was the period of the year, when that demand for goods was usually greatest upon the manufacturer. It was known, too, that the stock on hand with the warehousemen and merchants was much below par, and yet the demands upon the manufacturer for a fresh supply were entirely at a stand. How was this to be accounted for, unless from a feeling that, after the 5th of July, supplies of silks would be obtained from abroad, at a cheaper rate than the English manufacturer would be able to make them? This was the fair inference which must be drawn from the existing state of things. The petitioners feared, and justly, that the ports, once open, the supply for the foreign article would go on, to the exclusion of the English manufacturer; so that the mea-

sure would operate only as a relief and benefit to our foreign neighbours.—There were one or two other observations with which he meant to trouble the House. The business of silk throwsters occupied about one-third of the capital of those engaged in the trade. The quantity of manual labour, as distinguished from machinery, was less in proportion than that used in weaving and winding. It was said, that amongst silk throwsters, there were four-fifths of manual labour. Now, it was stated, that the price of labour must be regulated by the comparative provisions in this and the adjoining countries. He held in his hand a return, made by a gentleman upon whose accuracy he had every reason to rely, during his travels on the continent in July last. It stated, that at Lyons, the price of bread was three sous per lb. while in England it was 2½*d.* per lb. or nearly double. This alone would make the comparative value of labour in England and in France as two to one. The same gentleman stated, that the value of labour in England was 44½ per cent dearer than at Lyons, and 60 per cent dearer than at Zurich. Was it likely, with such a disparity in the value of labour, that the British manufacturer could compete with the produce of foreign markets? He stated again, that the silk manufacturers had established a case which entitled them to the inquiry. He implored the House to pause, and give time for that inquiry—he entreated them not to give their sanction rashly, and without due consideration, to measures which were already represented as having caused such great and extensive distress—measures which, if thus suddenly adopted, would at once destroy that last melancholy hope of the unfortunate—the hope of having their complaints considered, and their sufferings and distresses relieved. Would the House suffer this meritorious part of the population to say, that they had applied to parliament for a consideration of their complaints, and that parliament had refused to hear them—had refused to listen to the probable consequences of the introduction of a measure, which they offered to prove was highly injurious, and which the House seemed about to carry into effect, more out of deference to the right hon. gentleman who had proposed it, than for any other cause? On those subjects of expenditure in the silk trade, which appertained more particularly to the other branches of that business, he might repeat what he had already stated, that the winding and weaving resolved themselves, even still more than the other branch, into an expense proportioned to the price of provisions. About one-third of the persons engaged in this trade were employed in the two departments of it to which he had just alluded; and surely their situation was deserving of some attention. He considered that the immediate tendency of the right hon. gentleman's measure was, to suspend the demand for goods, which was the only remedy for the evils that this numerous and meritorious body of men were now suffering; and also, on the other hand, to create a demand, not for the product of the labours of the artificers of this country, but for those of foreigners, who possessed advantages that would enable them to beat us even in the English market; advantages which no protecting duty that the right hon. gentleman might uphold, would enable us to meet; for, the larger the amount of that duty, the greater would be the chance of throwing the trade into the hands of the smugglers [cries of hear, hear! from the ministerial benches]. Be it so—he would not retract his argument—he still contended, that if the duty was large, the trade would be thrown into the hands of smugglers, and foreign goods would be introduced, to the injury of the fair trader and of the industrious English manufacturer. What the present petitioners asked was, that the right hon. gentleman would re-consider the measure he had proposed, and delay its execution until a more convenient opportunity—until the hospitality he was ready to exercise towards foreigners was in some measure met by them—until that system of reciprocity, of which he had spoken so much and so triumphantly, had been established. Let not ministers rashly run the chance of the serious difficulties they might ultimately occasion, merely for the sake of a principle, and support a measure which might prove positively injurious to a considerable body of industrious men. The system of reciprocity to which he had alluded, was that system which had been mentioned with so much praise by the right hon. the chancellor of the Exchequer, when he described the flourishing condition of the empire. In the Spring of 1824, the right hon. gentleman had said, certainly in a very oratorical manner, and in a most metaphorical style, that "it was high time to

cut the cords which fastened commerce, which bound her, as it were, to the earth;" and consequently, to make the metaphor complete—to enable her to soar to heaven. Where, he would ask, had this, or anything like this, been done? He had no doubt the right hon. gentleman was prepared to receive foreign nations with open arms; that he had dealt out the hospitality of the country, with a liberal hand, to many who had most freely accepted it; but, had any of those persons been generous enough to give him an invitation in return? Had they acted on the principle of reciprocity so far as to extend to this country the benefits they had received themselves? If they had, he should be glad to learn what were those reciprocities. If they had not, was not their conduct a proof that the right hon. gentleman had been wrong; that he had gone too far; and that his foreign friends were not prepared to treat him in the same liberal manner? Had the Netherlands—had any foreign state been moved to act on the same principles as the right hon. gentleman. Had they performed one single act—had they acknowledged one principle of reciprocity—to justify the present measure, or the conduct of the right hon. gentleman, who was now urging this measure, in support of his own principles, and to show that we understood political economy better than our ancestors?—He had now only to advert to one other point. It was said that this measure was only in furtherance of others of a more general nature, which had received, in a great degree, the approbation of this House. Whether that statement of the approbation of this House were true or not, the measure was not less a fit subject for inquiry. Whether the right hon. gentleman had been led on, or supported by the cheers of those who surrounded him, or whether all he had done was upon his own responsibility, he was equally bound now to hesitate before he pursued his career any further. The people of England had a right to look to ministers for an account of those measures which they either produced or supported; and it was no answer to the people, when a disadvantageous measure had been passed, to say, that it had been done with the approbation of parliament. If the measure was in itself injurious, that approbation would not afford it a defence. He confessed, that if it was a proof of stupidity not to see the value of general principles in the abstract, he must plead guilty to the charge; but at the same time, he would say, that there was no quackery more common and notorious, nor any more injurious—no theory, nor want of theory, when reduced to practice, so dangerous, as to attempt to reduce every thing to the level of certain general principles, without bearing in view the particular circumstances, or the particular times, in which those principles were to be called into practice. It was trifling with the people to say that the principles stated were true, if the times and the circumstances were such as to render it improper to bring those principles into practice. It was in the application of principles that the great difficulty consisted. When they came to apply general principles to a country of such great and multifarious interests as this—to a country so peculiarly circumstanced—it was not at all surprising that his majesty's ministers should find themselves in the midst of difficulties—that they should discover they had been entrapped into dangers, and that then they should have no other consolation than that of not having seen the dangers before encountering them, and then of having no remedy to afford to them. The circumstances of this country, into which they now attempted to introduce these measures, ought to have been well considered. They ought not to have been taken by surprise, or to have acted incautiously, on such a subject. They ought not to have acted as if in utter ignorance of the present times, and of existing circumstances. "Ye gods! annihilate both space and time," seemed, however, to have been the prayer of the ministers; and, with respect to this measure at least, their prayer appeared to have been fully heard. Then did the right hon. gentleman open wide his arms, as if ready to receive in their capacious embrace, the commerce of the world; but to talk of reciprocity, in a country so circumstanced as this was, with respect to some other countries in Europe, was as preposterous as would be the attempt to put a man loaded with fetters to run a race with another, whose limbs were free. The hon. member for Bridgenorth, too, had come forward, with his principles of free trade, and so far had supported the right hon. gentleman; but he would not, if he could help it, allow five hundred thousand persons (the number said to be engaged in the silk trade) to be sacrificed to abstract princi-

ples, however pure those principles might be. On this point, he would cite the opinion of Mr. Burke, with whom he fully agreed. That right hon. and very learned person had said, when speaking of those unbending and hard-hearted metaphysicians, that they "exceeded the devil himself in point of malignity, and contempt for the happiness of mankind." He must say, that, in the present instance, he thought, if he might use the expression, that the right hon. gentleman had manifested an overweening attachment to abstract principle. One word more, and he had done. Ministers asked parliament to take this measure on their responsibility. The request was needless. No gentleman could relieve them from it. The House might divide the blame, and so lessen it; but ministers, by the possession of their office, by their acceptance of place, took upon themselves a responsibility from which nobody could relieve them. But, when the right hon. gentleman knew of that distress, of which the House had had some taste that night; when he knew that he had no remedy for this distress; when he knew these things, he would be guilty of extreme rashness, if he refused the present motion; which did not ask for the rejection of his measure, but which called on him to hesitate, to pause, to examine, to hear the facts which had transpired since that resolution had been first proposed. The ministers had already incurred a responsibility, the extent of which he did not know; but he did believe that if, between that House and the feelings out of doors there existed any community, he might say, with almost a certainty, that they would be driven from their purpose by the vote of that night.

Mr. *Huskisson* rose, and spoke, in substance, as follows:—

Sir;—Although the hon. member for Coventry, who introduced the present motion, may be supposed to be under the influence of suggestions and views, which have been furnished to him by his constituents, and from other sources out of doors, I am, nevertheless, ready to admit, that that circumstance ought not to detract from the weight which is fairly due to the hon. member's statements and arguments, in support of the motion which he has submitted to the House.

But, Sir, however true this may be, as far as respects the hon. member for Coventry, the same observation applies not, in the remotest degree, to the hon. and learned gentleman who has seconded the motion; and who, acting, I must suppose, under the influence of a connection, certainly not political, but the more binding, perhaps, as having been more recently formed, has thought proper to take a wider range, and to indulge in a higher tone of declamation:—or, it may be, that he looks forward to the expectation of becoming the colleague of the hon. mover; and by his speech of this evening, proposes to declare himself a joint suitor with the hon. mover for the future favours of the good people of Coventry. Whatever may be the motives of the hon. and learned gentleman, I confess that I have listened with the utmost astonishment to the speech which he has just delivered.

Sir, in the course of that speech, the hon. and learned gentleman repeatedly told us, that he was not authorized to make certain statements—that he was not at liberty to admit this, and to admit that, This, I presume, is a mode of expression. in which gentlemen of the legal profession are wont to indulge, to mark that they keep themselves within the strict limits of their briefs, and that the doctrines which they advocate are those prescribed to them by their instructions. However customary and proper such language may be in the courts of law, it certainly sounds new and striking in the mouth of a member of this House.

With regard to the general tone of the hon. and learned gentleman's speech—the vehemence of his declamation, his unqualified censure, and his attempts at sarcasm, I can, with perfect sincerity, assure the House, and the hon. and learned gentleman, that I entertain no sentiment bordering upon anger, nor any other feeling, save one, in which I am sure I carry with me the sympathy and concurrence of all those who entertain sound and enlightened views upon questions of this nature—a feeling of surprise and regret, at finding that hon. and learned gentleman, now for the first time, launching forth his denunciations and invectives against principles and measures which have received the support of men the most intelligent and best informed, on both sides of this House, and throughout Europe.

Having said thus much, I leave the hon. and learned gentleman to the full enjoyment to be derived from the new lights that have so suddenly broken in

upon him. I leave to him, and to his hon. friends around him, to settle among themselves, the taunts, the sneers, and the sarcasms which he has heaped upon their heads, as the friends of those principles which are involved in the present discussion—principles which it has been their boast that they were the first to recommend, and of which they have uniformly been the most eager advocates in this House.

In whatever quarter the statements and arguments of the hon. member for Coventry may have originated, they are entitled to the serious and attentive consideration of the House; more especially if derived from individuals now suffering distress from want of employment, and who may have been led to believe, that that want of employment has been caused by measures which have been adopted by this House. This circumstance adds to the difficulty in which I am placed, in rising to address the House on the present occasion. In opposing the proposed inquiry, I feel that I may be represented as insensible or indifferent to the sufferings of those on whose behalf it is called for.

Sir, the hon. and learned member for Lincoln has, indeed, given countenance to this unjust imputation. He has not only chosen to assert, that I am mistaken in my views—he has not scrupled to insinuate, that I am without feeling for the distress now prevailing amongst the manufacturing classes [Mr. Williams here denied that he had asserted any thing of the kind]. What, then, Sir, did the hon. and learned gentleman mean by his quotation? To whom did he mean to apply the description of an "insensible and hard-hearted metaphysician, exceeding the devil in point of malignity"?—I appeal to the judgment of the House, whether the language made use of by the hon. and learned gentleman, with reference to me, was not such as to point to the inference, that I am that metaphysician, lost to every sentiment of humanity, and indifferent to every feeling, beyond the successful enforcement of some favourite theory, at whatever cost of pain and suffering to particular bodies of my fellow creatures? When the hon. and learned gentleman allows himself to talk of "hard-hearted metaphysicians, exceeding the devil in point of malignity," it is for him to reconcile such language with the general tenor of his sentiments on other occasions; to explain, as he best may, to those around him, whether they are included in that insinuation—and it is for me to meet that insinuation (as far as it was levelled at me) with those feelings of utter scorn with which I now repel it.

Still, Sir, it sits heavily on my mind, that any individual, or any body of individuals, should in any quarter be impressed with the notion, that I, or any of my right hon. colleagues, could be capable of that which has been imputed to us; and it is but perfectly natural that I should feel anxious to show that my own conduct, and that of my right hon. friends, has not been such as, in some quarters, it has been represented to be.

The hon. member for Coventry, and the hon. and learned member for Lincoln, have, by some strange perversion, argued the whole case, as if I, and those who act with me, were hastily and prematurely pressing on some new, and, till this evening, unheard-of measure—as if we were attempting to enforce that measure by all the influence of government: instead of which, we have proposed nothing, and are lying upon our oars, quietly waiting for the going into effect of an act of parliament, passed more than eighteen months ago, with the unanimous concurrence of this House; an act which is now the law of the land; and of the enactments of which all the parties concerned were as fully apprized on the day when it first passed this House, as they can be at this moment.

In the view which I take of the speech of the hon. member for Coventry, of which I do not complain, and of the speech of the hon. and learned member for Lincoln, of which I do complain, the greater part of their arguments go to impugn those principles of commercial policy, which under the sanction of Parliament, have now prevailed in this country, for the last two or three years;—a policy, which has for its object gradually to unfetter the commerce of the country, by the removal of those oppressive prohibitions and inconvenient restrictions, which had previously existed; and to give every facility and encouragement, consistent with vested interests, to the extension of the skill, the capital, and the industry of the people of England.

This, then, being the real drift of the argument especially brought forward by the hon. and learned gentleman, it is, with reference to a much greater question, that

I find myself called upon to consider the present motion. The point at issue is, not whether we shall grant the committee, but whether we shall re-establish the prohibitory system? If we re-establish it in one instance, we shall very soon be called upon to do so in many others. If we once tread back our steps, we shall not be able, in this retrograde motion, to stop at that point from which we first set out:—we must go further, and, ere long, we should have in this country a system of commerce, far more restrictive than that which was in force before the late changes. Anxious as I am to persevere in our present course, I say that, if we once depart from it, we must at least be consistent in our new career; and that, to be consistent, we must impose restrictions and prohibitions, far beyond those which have been lately removed.

The present question, therefore, is not *simply the motion before the House—but,* neither more nor less than, whether a restrictive or an enlarged system of commercial policy be the best for this country?

In order to come to a sound decision upon so important a subject, it behoves the House to look back a little to the course of events, and to bear in mind some of the occurrences which have materially contributed to those relaxations in the restrictive system, of which it is now the fashion to complain.

With this view, I must ask the permission of the House to call its attention to a petition, presented to the House in the month of May, 1820, a period which, like the present, was one of great difficulty and public distress. The petition is somewhat long, but, I assure the House, that those hon. members who may favour me with their attention will be well rewarded by hearing sound principles laid down, in the clearest language, not by philosophers and unbending theorists—not by visionaries and hard-hearted metaphysicians, with the feelings of demons in their breasts—but by merchants and traders; men of the greatest practical experience in all that relates to commerce. This, petition, Sir, is a document of no ordinary interest. The House will see how decidedly the petitioners maintain the principles upon which his majesty's government have acted; and, when I have done reading it, I am sure they will admit, that those principles are therein expounded in words far more apt and forcible than any which I can command. The petition, as I have already said, is not the exposition of any speculative doctrine. It conveys to the House the deliberate judgment of the merchants and traders of the city of London; the result of their daily observation of the evils inflicted upon the country, by the unnecessary restrictions imposed upon their industry and pursuits. The petition states,—

"That foreign commerce is eminently conducive to the wealth and prosperity of the country, by enabling it to import the commodities for the production of which the soil, climate, capital, and industry of other countries are best calculated, and to export in payment those articles for which its own situation is better adapted.

"That freedom from restraint is calculated to give the utmost extension to foreign trade, and the best direction to the capital and industry of the country.

"That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable, as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation.

"That a policy, founded on these principles, would render the commerce of the world an interchange of mutual advantages, and diffuse an increase of wealth and enjoyments among the inhabitants of each state.

"That, unfortunately, a policy, the very reverse of this, has been, and is more or less adopted and acted upon by the government of this and of every other country; each trying to exclude the productions of other countries, with the specious and well-meant design of encouraging its own productions; thus inflicting on the bulk of its subjects, who are consumers, the necessity of submitting to privations in the quantity or quality of commodities; and thus rendering, what ought to be the source of mutual benefits, and of harmony among states, a constantly recurring occasion of jealousy and hostility.

"That the prevailing prejudices in favour of the protective or restrictive system may be traced to the erroneous supposition, that every importation of foreign commodities occasions a diminution or discouragement of our own productions to the same extent, whereas, it may be clearly shown, that although the particular description of production which

could not stand against unrestrained foreign competition would be discouraged; yet, as no importation could be continued for any length of time without a corresponding exportation, direct or indirect, there would be an encouragement for the purpose of that exportation of some other production, to which our situation might be better suited; thus affording at least an equal, and probably a greater, and certainly a more beneficial employment to our own capital and labour."

I will not trouble the House with reading the whole of this valuable document. —[Loud cries of "Read! read!"] I will then, Sir, read the whole, for it is a most valuable document; and, indeed, so it was thought at the time, for it is one of a few, if not the only one, which is given at length in the published reports of our proceedings.

"That of the numerous protective and prohibitory duties of our commercial code, it may be proved, that while all operate as a very heavy tax on the community at large, very few are of any ultimate benefit to the classes in whose favour they were originally instituted, and none to the extent of the loss occasioned by them to other classes.

"That among the other evils of the restrictive or protective system, not the least is, that the artificial protection of one branch of industry, or source of protection against foreign competition, is set up as a ground of claim by other branches for similar protection; so that, if the reasoning upon which these restrictive or prohibitory regulations are founded were followed consistently, it would not stop short of excluding us from all foreign commerce whatsoever.

"And the same strain of argument which, with corresponding prohibitions and protective duties, should exclude us from foreign trade, might be brought forward to justify the re-enactment of restrictions upon the interchange of productions (unconnected with public revenue) among the kingdoms composing the union, or among the counties of the same kingdom.

"That an investigation of the effects of the restrictive system at this time is peculiarly called for, as it may, in the opinion of the petitioners, lead to a strong presumption, that the distress which now so generally prevails is considerably aggravated by that system; and that some relief may be obtained by the earliest practicable removal of such of the restraints as may be shown to be most injurious to the capital and industry of the community, and to be attended with no compensating benefit to the public revenue.

"That a declaration against the anti-commercial principles of our restrictive system is of the more importance at the present juncture, inasmuch as, in several instances of recent occurrence, the merchants and manufacturers in foreign states have assailed their respective governments with applications for further protective or prohibitory duties and regulations, urging the example and authority of this country, against which they are almost exclusively directed, as a sanction for the policy of such measures: and certainly, if the reasoning upon which our restrictions have been defended is worth any thing, it will apply in behalf of the regulations of foreign states against us; they insist upon our superiority in capital and machinery, as we do upon their comparative exemption from taxation, and with equal foundation.

"That nothing would more tend to counteract the commercial hostility of foreign states, than the adoption of a more enlightened and more conciliatory policy on the part of this country.

"That although, as a matter of mere diplomacy, it may sometimes answer to hold out the removal of particular prohibitions on high duties, as depending upon corresponding concessions by other states in our favour, it does not follow, that we should maintain our restrictions, in cases where the desired concessions on their part cannot be obtained; our restrictions would not be less prejudicial to our own capital and industry, because other governments persisted in pursuing impolitic regulations.

"That, upon the whole, the most liberal would prove to be the most politic course on such occasions.

"That, independent of the direct benefit to be derived by this country on every occasion of such concession or relaxation, a great incidental object would be gained by the recognition of a sound principle or standard, to which all subsequent arrangements might be referred; and by the salutary influence which a promulgation of such just views, by the legislature and by the nation at large, could not fail to have on the policy of other states.

"That in thus declaring, as the petitioners do, their conviction of the impolicy and injustice of the restrictive system, and in desiring every practical relaxation of it, they have in view only such parts of it as are not connected, or are only subordinately so, with the public revenue: as long as the necessity for the present amount of revenue subsists, the petitioners cannot expect so important a branch of it as the Customs to be given up, nor to be materially diminished, unless some substitute less objectionable be suggested: but it is against every restrictive regulation of trade not essential to the revenue, against all duties merely protective from foreign competition, and against the excess of such duties as are partly for the purpose of revenue and partly for that of protection: that the prayer of the present petition is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of parliament; the petitioners therefore humbly pray, that the House will be pleased to take the subject into consideration, and to adopt such measures as may be calculated to give greater freedom to foreign commerce, and thereby to increase the resources of the state."

It will be clear to all who have been at the trouble to attend to the very able document which I have just read, that it embraces all the great principles of commercial policy, upon which parliament has since legislated.

Why do I lay so much stress upon this petition? For the purpose of showing, first, that if the government have pursued this course, we have done so, not on the recommendations of visionaries and theorists, but of practical men of business: secondly, that the merchants of the city of London—the great mart of the commerce and wealth of the country—felt convinced, in 1820, that the distress of that period was greatly aggravated by the narrow and short-sighted system of restrictions and prohibitions which then prevailed; and that, in their judgment, the alleviation, if not the cure of that distress, was to be sought for in the removal of those restrictions and prohibitions.

And, because we have followed up, cautiously and circumspectly, the recommendations of the mercantile community, are we to be told by men who know nothing of commerce, that we are unfeeling projectors and metaphysicians, insensible to the wants and the miseries of our fellow creatures? If this be a just charge against us, what are we to think of the parties who could sign, or of the member who could present, such a petition as this? This morning I took the trouble to look at the names of the merchants who signed it; and, the first signature I read is that of one of the most distinguished of that class in the city of London; a gentleman who was many years ago governor of the Bank of England, who is now one of the directors of that establishment, and who was, for a long time, a valuable member of this House; a gentleman, who, in the best sense of the word, is a practical man, and one whose conduct in private life would protect him (if any man can be protected by his conduct) from the suspicion of being a "wild and unfeeling theorist"—a "hard-hearted metaphysician"—"alike indifferent to the wants and the miseries of his fellow creatures"—I mean Mr. Samuel Thornton. And, besides his name, the list contains the names of others, who, like him, have been governors of the Bank of England; of several who are now in the direction of that great establishment; and of many who hold the highest rank in the commercial world.

Let it not, however, be supposed, that I offer this petition to the House in the way of an apology for myself and my right hon. colleagues—in the way of extenuation of any thing which we may have done, to excite the wrath of the hon. and learned member for Lincoln. Sir, I think now, as I have always thought, that our measures require no apology. I believe now, as I have always believed, that they are calculated to promote the best interests of the people. I say now, as I have always said, that those who, either by their speeches in parliament, or the exertions of their talents out of it, have contributed to bring the people of England to look with an eye of favour on the principles recommended in this petition, have done themselves the greatest honour, and the country an essential benefit.

If, however, I refrain from troubling the House with apologies, where I feel that they are not required, neither do I wish to claim for his majesty's government, any participation in the merit of these measures, beyond what really belongs to us. By a reference to many other petitions and proceedings of a like nature with those to which I have already adverted, I could show that, in all these matters, the first impulse was not given

by the government. We claim for ourselves no such credit. The changes hitherto made have been the result of public opinion, sanctioned by the concurrence of practical men, and confirmed by the proceedings and inquiries of the two Houses of parliament. We did not create that opinion: we did not anticipate it: we did not even act upon it, until it was clearly and distinctly manifested. And, in what we have done, we have not exceeded the sober limits prescribed by the authority of those who, by the habits and pursuits of their lives, were most competent to form a sound judgment. But, when that judgment was pronounced and recorded, it was our duty to act upon it. From those who fill responsible situations, the country has a right to expect, not that they should be slow of conviction to important truths in matters of political economy; but that they should be cautious in deliberating, before they attempt to give them a practical application. The goad which is used to give increased impetus to the machine is an instrument more properly placed in other hands: the care of government should rather be to regulate the drag, so as not to check the advance, but to maintain a safe and steady progress towards improvement.

Has this been the principle of our policy on the subject now under consideration? Before I sit down, I think I shall prove, Sir, that the system upon which his majesty's government have acted has uniformly been guided by that principle. Need I remind the House, how frequently, and with what asperity, we have been charged from the opposite benches, with reluctance and tardiness in carrying into execution those principles of an enlarged and enlightened policy in matters of commerce, upon which all parties were said to be agreed? Year after year have we been urged by the force of public opinion out of doors, and by the earnest remonstrances of honourable members within, to adopt the very measures against which a senseless clamour is now attempted to be excited.

Who were the first, and the most earnest, in suggesting these measures—aye, and in wishing to push them to extremes—but some of those very persons whom we now find arrayed against us, and against those principles which they formerly supported? By whom was the petition which I have just read to the House presented? By whom was the prayer of it advocated?

After great note of preparation—after a formal notice of what was about to come—this petition, Sir, was brought down, on the 8th of May 1820, by the hon. member for Taunton,* whom I now see in his place. He it was, Sir, who introduced it to the attention of the House, in a long, but able and elaborate, speech; too long to be read by me now, as I have read the petition; although, by so doing, I should add a most luminous commentary in support of the doctrines of that petition, and should best shew, by what force of argument and weight of authority the hon. member then contended for those measures which the House is now called upon to condemn, and in which condemnation he himself appears disposed to concur.

After mentioning the petition, and the great respectability of the gentlemen by whom it was signed; and after regretting that "there was in the then circumstances of public embarrassment much, to which no remedy could be applied, at least no parliamentary remedy," the hon. gentleman went on to say, that "the first desideratum was such security and tranquillity in the country as would enable the possessor of capital to employ it without apprehension."

The House will recollect, that the period at which this petition was laid upon our table was one of great public distress; and, in that respect, it but too much resembled the present time. Now, however, though the country is again visited with pecuniary pressure, and though the labouring classes (many of them) are suffering great privations from the want of employment, I feel confident that we shall not witness the same danger to property, or the same disposition to violence, which at that time prevailed in the manufacturing districts. I feel confident that the unfortunate individuals, who, in 1820, allowed themselves to be misled by unprincipled agitators, will recollect how much their sufferings were increased by listening to pernicious counsels—counsels, which may prolong and aggravate, but which can, in no case, abridge or relieve their privations—and that they will not, a second time, lend a willing ear to those who would lead them on to their destruction. I trust they will so conduct themselves under their present difficultiest

* Mr. Baring. See Parliamentary Debates, New Series, Vol. i. p. 165.

as to conciliate the regard and sympathy of every other class, and to excite in the bosoms of those, from whom alone they can expect assistance, no other feelings than those of kindness and benevolence.

Sir, after "security and tranquillity," the hon. member for Taunton proceeded to say, that "the second desideratum was, as great a freedom of trade as was compatible with other and important considerations." In the opinion of the hon. member, at that time, a free trade was the very essence of commercial prosperity; and, therefore, he pressed us to adopt, all at once, the system which we have since gradually introduced.

The hon. member then proceeded—as he has since done, upon several occasions, and done, indeed, this session—to tax my right hon. friend the chancellor of the Exchequer (who then filled the situation which I now hold), and the other members of his majesty's government, with apathy, and a total indifference to the distressed state of the manufacturing districts. "So far were they," said the hon. member, "from being sensible of the necessity of some exertion, that they went on, from year to year, trusting that the next year would be spontaneously productive of some favourable change, and, apparently, with very indistinct notions of what the real condition of the country was. Whenever a question arose between two classes of the community, government, without seeming to have any opinion of their own, stood by, until they ascertained which party could give them the most effectual support. If the House looked back to an earlier period of those which were still our own times, they would behold a different picture; they would find Mr. Pitt engaged in framing a commercial treaty; and amidst difficulties of every description, boldly taking whatever steps appeared to him to be the best calculated to advance our commercial prosperity. He wished that he could see a little of the same spirit in the present day; but, instead of that, his majesty's ministers were balancing one party against another, and trying how they could keep their places from year to year; neglecting, in the meanwhile, all those great commercial and national questions, to which their most lively attention ought to be directed."

The hon. member for Taunton then went on to say—and I perfectly agree with him—that, "the first doctrine which the petitioners wished to combat, was that fallacious one which had, of late years, arisen, that this country ought to subsist on its own produce; that it was wise, on the part of every country to raise within itself the produce requisite for its consumption." "It was really absurd to contend," continued the hon. member, "that if a country, by selling any article of manufacture, could purchase the produce which it might require, at one-half the expense at which that produce could be raised, it should nevertheless be precluded from doing so."

This is unquestionably sound doctrine, and I readily admit it. But, how is it to be reconciled with the doctrine, which is now maintained by great authorities out of doors, as that which ought to be the rule of our commercial policy? According to these authorities, to which we have now to add that of the hon. and learned seconder of the present motion, prohibition is the only effectual protection to trade: duties must be unavailing for this purpose, because the influence of soil and climate, the price of labour, the rate of taxation, and other circumstances, are constantly varying in different countries, and consequently the scale of protection would require to be varied from month to month. But, what is the legitimate inference to be drawn from this exclusive system? Can it be other than this—that all interchange of their respective commodities, between different countries of the world, is a source of evil to the one or the other?—that each country must shut itself up within itself, making the most of its own resources, refusing all commerce with any other country, barbarously content to suffer wants which this commerce might easily supply, and to waste its own superfluous productions at home; because, to exchange them for the superfluities of that other country, instead of being an exclusive advantage to either party, would afford an equivalent benefit to both. This is the short theory of prohibitions, which these sage declaimers against all theory are so anxious to recommend to the practical merchants of this country.

But, if this system be wise and just in itself; if, for the reasons alleged in its support, it be necessary for the protection of British industry, let us see to what it leads. Can this country command labour on the same terms as Ireland? Is the scale of taxation the same? Are the

poor-rates the same in the two countries? Is there any country in Europe which, more than Ireland, differs from Great Britain in these and many other particulars, affecting their commercial relations? Does it not follow, that, if we admit the system of prohibitions now recommended to us by the hon. and learned member for Lincoln, we must prohibit all commercial intercourse with Ireland—we must revive those laws which forbade the manufactures, and repelled the productions of her soil—we must sacrifice the mutual benefits, which both parts of the empire now derive from the unrestricted freedom of intercourse—we must again revert to the prejudices of our ancestors?

And, for what?—because, from prejudices certainly less pardonable, if not from motives less sincere, than those of our ancestors, a senseless clamour has recently been raised against the present system of our commercial policy. I have no desire to disturb the partizans of the opposite system, in the enjoyment of their favourite theory. All I ask of them is, a similar forbearance towards us. Let each system be fully and fairly tried. For the sake of freedom of trade and industry, and for the sake of England, let England be the field of trial for our system. For the sake of prohibition and monopoly, let the system of our adversaries also be fairly tried; only let the trial be made upon some other country.

But, can prohibition ever be tried under circumstances of greater favour than it now experiences in Spain? In that flourishing country, prohibition has been carried to the very extreme. There restriction has been added to restriction—there, all the fruits of that beautiful system are to be seen, not yet, perhaps, in full maturity, but sufficiently mature, to enable every one to judge of their qualities. Spain is the best sample of the prohibitory system; the most perfect model of fallen greatness and of internal misery, of which modern civilization affords an example—an example to be traced, not only in the annihilation of her commerce and maritime power, but, in her scanty revenue, in her bankrupt resources, in the wretchedness of her population, and in her utter insignificance among the great powers of the world. The commercial policy of Spain is simply this—to admit nothing from other countries, except what the smuggler brings in. And the commercial wisdom of the hon. and learned seconder of the present motion is equal to that of Spain.

I must now beg of the House to indulge me for a little, while I endeavour to go through the detail of the specific measures recommended in the speech of the hon. member for Taunton, on presenting the London petition. It will be perceived, how false and unfounded are all those clamours which have been heaped upon me and my right hon. colleagues, for having unnecessarily made those alterations in our system of commercial policy, which, if I am to believe certain gentlemen, have plunged this country into misery and ruin.

The hon. member for Taunton, who is so great a practical authority—the greatest, perhaps, this country affords—did not content himself, in this speech, with stating general principles. He referred to details; and, as I have just observed, he proposed measures of relief of a specific and particular nature. These propositions the House, I hope, will permit me to go over, one by one, in order to show that his majesty's government have not been wanting in attention to the suggestions of the merchants of the city of London, nor backward in adopting their remedies, and recommending them to the consideration of the House.

The first measure pointed out upon that occasion, and recommended in the warmest terms to the attention of his majesty's ministers, for the relief of the country, was, "an alteration of the duty on the importation of wool." "What can be so absurd," said the hon member, "as a tax on the raw materials of our manufactures?" Accordingly, he urged the abolition of the duty on the importation of foreign wool, dyeing drugs, and such other articles as are used in the great manufactures of this country. What, at that time, was our answer to this proposition? Why, this—"we have no objection to take off the duty on the importation of foreign wool, provided you will consent to allow the free exportation of British wool."—"No," said the woollen manufacturers, "take off the duty on foreign wool, if you please; but keep in force the law which prohibits the exportation of British wool from this country." To this proposal we would not agree. We could not, upon any principle of justice, open our markets to an untaxed article of foreign growth, unless the manufacturer would concede his monopoly over

the like article of our own growth. After years and years of struggle and conflict, we at last succeeded in convincing our opponents, that the duty on foreign wool might be taken off, and the prohibition to export British wool be repealed, without endangering their interests.

And what has been the result? Where is the ruin that was so confidently predicted? I own I am more and more distrustful of the predictions of these practical authorities. Instead of our manufactures being ruined—instead of the fulfilment of the assurances, that all the British wool would be exported, to the utter destruction of our manufactures, and that from their destruction the foreign wool would no longer be wanted in this country—what has been the real effect of this measure? Why, that since the removal of the restrictions on the export, we have sent abroad the amazing quantity of 100,000 lbs. weight of British wool; while, of foreign wool, we have imported no less a quantity than 40,000,000 lbs. weight. This, Sir, is not speculation. It is practice and result against speculation. We removed the restrictive and prohibitory duties, and the consequences were, that we imported an excess of the foreign raw material, while we exported, comparatively, none of native growth—because we had a better market for it at home. Good or bad, therefore, the first measure recommended to the attention of his majesty's ministers by the hon. member has been carried into complete effect.

The second measure proposed for our adoption by the hon. member for Taunton, was a general revision of the revenue laws, with a view to their simplification. The hon. member stated—and he stated truly—that those laws were so numerous, so complicated, and so contradictory, that mercantile men could not understand them—that they were at once a great impediment to trade, and a source of vexation and oppression to all who were engaged in it—that no man, however innocent his intention, could escape their penalties; that, therefore, it was the bounden duty of his majesty's government to simplify and consolidate them.

The task was one of great magnitude and difficulty; but, we did not shrink from it. My right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, devoted a great deal of time and attention to the subject; but, I am free to admit, that we never could have succeeded in our undertaking, without the assistance of an official gentleman, in the service of the customs, a gentleman* of the most unwearied diligence, and who is entitled, for his persevering exertions, and the benefit he has conferred on the commercial world, to the lasting gratitude of the country. Of the difficulties of the undertaking, the House will be enabled to judge, when I state that there were no fewer than five hundred statutes, relative to the Customs alone, to wade through; independently of the numerous enactments concerning smuggling, warehousing the plantations, &c. In the performance of this duty, we had innumerable difficulties to encounter, and battles without end to fight. And now, Sir, in one little volume,† which I hold in my hand, are comprised all the laws at present in existence, on the subject of the management and the revenue of the Customs, of navigation, of smuggling, of warehousing, and of our colonial trade, compressed in so clear and yet so comprehensive a manner, that no man can possibly mistake the meaning or the application of them. I do not say this to boast of the successful result of our labours. It was the duty of government to do what it has done. I only adduce it to show, that this, the second recommendation of the hon. member, as the organ of the commercial world, has not been disregarded.

Then comes the third recommendation of the hon. member for Taunton; namely, that we should do away with prohibitions altogether; and substitute, in all cases, protecting for prohibitory duties. I will beg leave to read a short extract from what I consider a very accurate report of this part of the hon. member's speech. "Another desirable step" said he, "would be, to do away totally prohibitions, as much as possible." To be sure, Sir, it may be difficult to reconcile "totally," and "as much as possible;" but, I have no doubt the hon. member's meaning was to express his thorough detestation of the prohibitory principle. "Where," he continues, "protection for particular manufactures is considered to be necessary, it ought to be in the form of duty, and not in that of prohibition. Prohibi-

* J. D. Hume, esq. Comptroller of his Majesty's Customs in the port of London.

† Laws of the Customs, by J. D. Hume, esq.

tions had, no doubt, seriously injured the revenue, by the encouragement which they gave to smuggling. The Customs had fallen off a million and a half, in the course of the last year. He was sure that a good deal of that defalcation might be ascribed to prohibitions."

I intreat the House to attend to what follows in the speech of the hon. member —"Nothing could be more absurd than to suppose, that any prohibition would prevent the introduction of the articles which were in demand. The fact was, that, at an advance of twenty or twenty-five per cent, all light prohibited articles might be had at our doors. He would not say which sex was most to blame, but such was the fact." Now, here we have the opinion of a practical man, who had come to this conclusion after collecting the best evidence upon the subject, during his repeated visits to Paris. Indeed, I cannot help thinking, that the hon. member had silk, and nothing but silk, in his view, at the time when he made these allusions. The hon. member has long been a professor of those doctrines which he now reprobates me for upholding, as much as he then censured the government for not more readily adopting. Even in the year 1817 —also a period of distress—I find the hon. member declaring to the House, that, "in the article of silk, smuggling was carried on to a very great extent; a proof of which was to be found in the fact, that although silks were in much greater use now than formerly, yet that the British manufacturer was ruined." So that it appears, Sir, that in the year 1817, the silk manufacture, which, according to the doctrines of the present day, can only flourish under a system of prohibition, was, in that year, in a state of ruin, owing to prohibition.

The stagnation and embarrassment of 1816 and 1817 were followed by a state of unusual commercial activity. In like manner, the depression of 1822 and 1823 terminated in the extraordinary spirit of speculation which marked the Autumn of 1824, and the Spring and Summer of 1825. Is it not irrelevant to the present discussion to compare these two periods, each commencing with commercial distress, and each ending in over-trading—each marked, in its first stage, by a great contraction of our paper circulation, and the accumulation of a vast amount of gold in the coffers of the Bank, and, in its second, by a great expansion of our circulating credit, and by the re-exportation of most of the gold which the Bank had previously accumulated. This comparison, whilst it connects itself with the question now under our immediate consideration, is calculated to throw some light on the equally important question of the currency, which, at this moment, occupies so much of the attention of parliament and of the country.

At the beginning of the year 1817, "the Bank," as we are informed by the report of the committee of 1819, "possessed a larger amount of cash and bullion in their coffers than they had been in the possession of at any former period since their establishment." With this accumulation, they gave notice of a partial resumption of cash payments, engaging to pay in gold all notes under *5l.* From the beginning of 1817 till the month of July in that year, the whole demand for gold coin, under this notice, did not exceed 38,000*l.*; but, in consequence of a great augmentation of Bank paper in August 1817 (exceeding, by upwards of three millions, the amount of the corresponding month in the preceding year), and of a like augmentation of country paper, the foreign exchanges were turned against this country; and, from that moment, the gold was withdrawn from the Bank with much greater rapidity. In the course of the following eighteen months, many millions of coin were thus put into circulation, without any corresponding diminution in the amount of Bank notes; —or rather, to speak more accurately, these millions, as soon as they were taken from the Bank, were sent to France, and other parts of the continent, till the treasure of the Bank was very much reduced at the beginning of 1819; and then the amount of their notes was again contracted. This contraction was followed by a great depression of commerce, and of prices, in the subsequent years. During this depression, the government were frequently called upon, as they are now called upon, to give relief by an issue of commercial Exchequer-bills; but our first object, then, was permanently to restore—as our first object, now, is effectually to secure—a system of cash payments: the success of which might have been endangered by this mode of relief. So much for the first period, as far as relates to our currency.

In the first stage of the second period (1822, 1823, and a part of 1824), the Bank again accumulated an amount of

gold, greater even than what it possessed at the begining of 1817. Between September 1824 and November 1825, that gold was again taken out of the Bank, under all the like circumstances of foreign exchanges being against this country, and with the like results as had occurred in 1818. Again, notwithstanding the issue of so many millions of coin, the amount of Bank notes and of country paper was increased: again, these millions so issued were, for the greatest part, exported; and again, in the Autumn of 1825, the Bank was driven to take precautions, by contracting its circulation, in order to protect its remaining treasure. What has since occurred is known and felt by all.

So much for the currency; now for the trade.

In 1816, and 1817, during the first absorption of treasure by the Bank, the amount of silk imported was, upon the average of the two years, 1,150,807 lbs: in 1818, during the first flight of our coin to the continent, that importation was raised to 2,101,618 lbs., being an increase of 81 per cent.—Of sheep's wool, the average importation of the first two years was 11,416,853 lbs.: in the year 1818 alone the quantity was 26,405,486 lbs. being an increase of 130 per cent.—Of cotton-wool, the average of the two first years was 423,580 bales: the amount in 1818 was 660,580 bales, being an increase of 57 per cent.

Let us now compare the import of the same articles in the years 1823 and 1824, with the import of 1825. It will turn out as follows; Silk, average import of 1823 and 1824, 2,780,600 lbs.: import of 1825, 4,231,673 lbs., being an increase at the rate of 50 per cent. Sheep's wool, average import of 1823 and 1824, 19,225,306 lbs.: import of 1825, 38,705,682 lbs.; being an increase at the rate of 100 per cent. Cotton wool, average import of 1823 and 1824, 167,120,065 lbs.: import of 1825, 222,457,616 lbs., being an increase at the rate of 33 per cent.*

I will not go more at length into this subject. It would lead me too far away from other topics, growing more immediately out of this debate, to which I have still to advert; but, I have said enough to point out to those who take an interest in these matters, the intimate relation that exists between our currency and our trade; to show in what manner the expansion of our paper circulation, combined with an unfavourable foreign exchange, leads to over-trading, till over-trading again forces a contraction of the currency: thus, producing those alternations of extravagant excitement and of fearful depression, which this country has so often experienced of late years; alternations, of which the consequences are at once so dangerous to men of capital, so distressing to the labourers who depend for employment on that capital, and so subversive of those principles of security to property, on which the prosperity of every commercial state must ultimately rest.

The immediate inference which I draw from this comparison is, that the present stagnation in the silk-trade is more produced by the late alternation, than by any effect of the law which will come into operation next July.

To return, Sir, to the speech of the hon. member for Taunton. The fourth point to which he called the attention of government was, the state of the navigation laws. The change which the hon. member recommended would, in fact, have amounted to the total repeal of those laws. He thought "that no restriction ought to be held on foreign ships importing into this country, whether the produce was of their own, or any other country." Accustomed to look on these laws as the prop of our maritime power, and to watch with a jealous eye any encroachment upon them, we could not consent to this sweeping principle of innovation. On the other hand, we professed ourselves ready to inquire, how far some of their regulations, inconvenient to trade, might be dispensed with, without prejudice to the higher political objects, for which these laws were originally enacted. This inquiry was gone into with great care, by a committee, over the labours of which, my right hon. friend, the master of the Mint, presided; and the result has been that, by his zeal and diligence, several measures have been introduced to the House, which have led to a relaxation in those laws, highly beneficial to the commerce of the country, and in no way injurious to our strength as a maritime power. But the principle of those laws is still retained. In this in-

* These returns for the years 1823 and 1824, are made up from January to January, and for 1825 from October 1824 to October 1825; the return to January 1826 not being yet received.

stance, certainly, we have not been able to go all the lengths recommended by the practical men; but, be it recollected, that the charge, against which I am now upon my defence, is that we are theorists.

The fifth point, which was strongly recommended by the hon. member for Taunton, was the removal of the transit duties on german linens and some other articles of foreign produce. At the very time that the hon. member was pressing for this removal, he must have been aware, that his majesty's ministers were sensible of the impolicy of these restrictions, and that they were desirous, not only to get rid of them but, also, to revise the whole system of bounties and drawbacks. But he could not be ignorant of the complication of interests, and the difficulty of detail, which we had to encounter, in every stage of this undertaking. He could not be ignorant of the prejudices by which this system was upheld. For the abatement of those prejudices, we thought it more safe and more expedient to trust to the influence of time and reason, than, at all hazards, to encounter them at once by an act of power. This was our theory in 1820; and, I am now happy to add that, by adhering to it, we have been completely successful. The transit duties have been all removed; and the system of bounties and drawbacks has undergone an entire revision, and been remodelled on an improved plan.

To come to the sixth recommendation of the hon. member for Taunton. He told us, that "it was of importance that we should alter our commercial regulations with respect to France. It was desirable," added he, "that all restrictive regulations between the trade of England and France should be removed; but to do so, we must begin at home. It would be unfair to attempt a negotiation for a commercial intercourse, while we kept our ports shut against them. Let it be considered, that it was not by a restrictive system that this country had grown to such a pitch of greatness; but, on the contrary, that such a system was a bar to that greatness. It was necessary also to remove an impression which our system of commerce had made abroad. We were looked up to as the first commercial nation in the world; and it was therefore believed, that we had adopted our restrictive or protecting system, from a conviction of its beneficial effects on our commerce. This impression it was our interest, as well as our duty, to remove, by altering our commercial regulations with foreign powers."

This advice of the hon. member for Taunton, his majesty's government have also attended to. What have we done in this case? We have "begun at home." We have set an example to the nations of the continent. We have put an end to the restrictive system affecting France, as far as we could put an end to it. And, we have invited France to follow in our track, by doing away with the obstacles existing on her part to a greater freedom of trade. France has taken a first step towards placing the intercourse between the two countries upon a footing of great facility. This is a practical approximation on her part to the principle of a more enlarged system of commerce; a principle equally recognized by the most enlightened statesmen, and the most leading merchants of that country; a principle which cannot fail to make its way in France, as it has made its way in this country, by discussion and inquiry, and which, in proportion as it gains ground, will confer advantages upon France, and, by her and our example, furnish a salutary lesson to the rest of the world.

As I have adverted to this subject, I will beg leave to say one word as to the convention of navigation recently concluded between the two countries; upon which a misconception appears to have gone abroad. I allude to the decree of the French government against the introduction of the produce of Asia, Africa, and America, through this country, into France, for home consumption. The regulation of this decree has been mistakenly considered as the effect of a stipulation under the convention. This I beg leave to deny. The decree is an act of the French government, quite independent of the convention. It might, and probably would, have been passed, had no such convention been made between the two countries. A similar law was proposed to the Chambers last year, and then only postponed. It is a regulation of which we have no right to complain, and against which we have no right to stipulate; because, the like restriction exists in this country. That for which we had a right to stipulate, and for which we have stipulated, is, that if, in relaxation of this decree, any of the productions of Asia, Africa, or America, are admitted into France for home consumption, from

this country, they shall be equally admitted, and upon the same duties, in British as in French vessels.

I do not deny that, beyond what is provided for by this convention, much might be done to improve the commercial relations of this country and France; but, the basis is laid down, and the contracting parties have expressly reserved to themselves "the power of making, by mutual consent, such relaxations in the strict execution of the article, as they may think useful to the respective interests of the two countries, *on the principle of mutual concessions*, affording each to the other reciprocal or equivalent advantages." The development and further application of this principle must be left to time, and to an improved state of public opinion in France. But, I confidently appeal to the House, and to the hon. member, to say, whether the best course for doing away with prejudices and unfavourable impressions on the continent, would be for us to retrace our steps; to re-enact the old prohibitions and restrictions; and to exclude foreign merchandize and foreign shipping, as we had formerly done.

Seventhly, and lastly, the hon. member for Taunton recommended to his majesty's government, "an extension of our trade with British India." In answer to this suggestion, it is only necessary for me to say, that our attention has been incessantly directed towards that desirable object. We have left no steps untried, to prevail on the East India company to consent to an enlargement of the private trade. To a certain point we have succeeded, though not to the extent of our wishes. If all that the hon. member sought for has not been done, the fault is not ours: we have no means of compelling the company to comply with the wishes of the merchants. The vested rights of that corporation have been conferred upon them by parliament; and, inconvenient or not, we are bound to respect those rights, till the expiration of that period for which they have been granted.

These are the principal improvements which were urged on the government of the country, in the year 1820, by the hon. member for Taunton; speaking—be it always remembered—in the name, and on the behalf, of the merchants of London. To all of these suggestions, I say, his majesty's ministers have attended. My right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, who then filled the situation which I now hold, replied to the speech of the hon. member on that occasion. He repelled the accusation of the hon. member, that the government were insensible to the sufferings of the people. He avowed his desire to proceed in the course that was recommended; but he, at the same time, represented the difficulties by which his endeavours had, till then, been opposed. Did the hon. member acknowledge himself satisfied with the assurance and explanation of my right honourable friend? By no means Sir.

So eager was the hon. member for Taunton for the immediate enforcement of these important changes, that he concluded his reply to my right hon. friend, in the following terms: "As to the petition itself, the principles which it contained had met with so unanimous a support, that he wondered whence that opposition could come, by which the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade seemed to be deterred from attempting any reform of our commercial system; and he could not help expressing a hope, that, for the future, that right hon. gentleman would not listen entirely to the suggestions of others, but, in treating the subject, would rely on his own excellent understanding."

With this admonition, the debate closed. The recommendations of the hon. member—the great authorities from which they originated—convinced the government, that the time was come, when they might go forward with measures, to which they had long before avowed a friendly disposition. The consequence was, a determination, on their part, to institute an inquiry before a committee of this House, in order to ascertain, how far and by what course of proceeding, the steps recommended, and any others founded upon the same principles, could be acted upon, for the general improvement of the commerce of the country.

In the other House of parliament, a committee was sitting, whose labours were directed to the same object. This committee had been appointed upon the motion of a noble marquis (the marquis of Lansdown), who had, at all times, taken the liveliest interest, in whatever relates to the trade and commerce of the country, and whose principles, in these matters, unlike to the grasshopper on the Royal Exchange, do not veer about, with every

change of the wind, or with every fluctuation in the speculations of those who transact business in that Exchange.

One of the subjects which particularly engaged the attention of the noble marquis, and of the committee over which he presided, was, the state of the silk trade. They heard evidence; they called for papers; and they examined witnesses from every quarter. What was the result of their investigation? Why, Sir, they state in their report, that, "it appears to the committee, that there is no bounds to smuggling, under the prohibitive system; and that, in the opinion of the committee, protecting duties might, advantageously, be substituted for prohibitive ones."

Such was the view taken by the committee of the House of Lords in 1821. I will not detain the House, by going at length into the course of inquiry by which they arrived at this conclusion. But, some attempt has been made this night to undervalue the evidence of two merchants from the United States, who were examined before the committee; and examined, be it recollected, upon oath. These two merchants came to Europe, for the purpose of purchasing silks. They first visited France; and then they came to England. They could be actuated by no other interest than that of procuring silks on the cheapest terms.

And what was their evidence? On being asked, as to the relative cost of the silks of France and the silks of England, one of them said, that "he had bought goods in France and in England; and that the difference, when the quality was equal, was from twenty to twenty-five per cent." And the other said, that "the difference did not exceed twenty per cent." But, both of them stated, that, in the article of silk hosiery, price and quality considered, they greatly preferred the English manufacture to that of France.

The report containing this evidence, recommended an alteration of the laws relative to the silk trade, by the removal of the duty on the raw material, and of the prohibition on wrought silks. Hon. members, however, are aware, that the House of Lords could not, from the nature of the proposed change, initiate a measure, to carry into effect the object of this report.

Nothing further took place till the year 1823; when the hon. member for the city of London (Mr. T. Wilson) came down to this House with a petition from the master manufacturers of Spital-fields, praying for a repeal of what is generally called, "the Spital-fields' act." This, as the House well knows, was a law for regulating the mode of working in that district; and for enabling the magistrates to fix the rate of wages to be given for each description of work. In short, a most unfit law to remain upon the Statute-book; but the professed object of which was, to protect the men against the exactions of their masters. The only possible excuse for having ever passed such a law is, that, when it was passed, the masters had a monopoly of the silk manufacture in this country.

I will tell the House why I state this. A deputation of the weavers of Spital-fields waited upon me, and my right hon. friend, the other day. They are a sincere, well-meaning, and, certainly, a well-behaved body of men. After hearing their representations, I was satisfied, that if I had put it to them, to make their choice between the revival of the Spital-fields act, or of the prohibitory system—if I had said to them, "You cannot have both a prohibition and the Spital-fields act, but you may have either the one or the other—take your choice!"—they would have instantly said, "Give us the Spital-fields act, and let the prohibition go to the winds." So much for practical feeling; which is now urged in opposition to what is called theory!

And here I must beg leave shortly to refer to the doctrine laid down in the petition presented in 1823, by the hon. member for the city of London, to which I have just alluded. The petitioners state, "that with our unlimited supply of silk from our territories in India, we might be independent of the rest of the world; that with our great command of capital, and the unrivalled skill of our artizans, the manufacturers did not fear the competition of any foreigners: and that, with a free trade, silk would become, like cotton, one of the staple manufactures of the country."

I do not mean to accuse these petitioners of making this statement, in order to entrap the public, and to induce the parliament to take measures which they knew would involve their own manufacture in distress; but, I have a right to refer to their petition, as well as to the more general petition of the merchants of London, to show that the measures which his majesty's ministers have taken are neither

the offspring of theory, nor measures which they carried in opposition to the prevailing opinion of the country, or of the trade. They brought forward these measures, because they were convinced that they were founded in sound policy; but not till they were satisfied, that they would meet with the concurrence and support of those who had a more immediate interest in their result. So far was government from any precipitation in carrying them into effect, that it was not till the year 1824, that they determined to propose the repeal of the duty on the raw material, and to permit the importation of foreign manufactured silk, subject to a protecting duty. They were aware that, without taking the duty off the raw material, they could not attempt this improvement; but, as soon as my right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer was enabled, by the flourishing state of the finances, to reduce taxation, he did not hesitate to remit this duty, as the necessary preliminary to the removal of the prohibition.

From that moment we lost the support of the hon. member for Taunton, to whom I have so often alluded; and his voice was only heard in opposition to measures which he had so long been recommending for our adoption.

My right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, having, on the 23rd of February 1824, stated generally to the House, what it was our intention to do; it fell to my lot, on the 8th of March to open the measure more in detail. Then it was that I heard, for the first time, of the serious opposition which the proposed measure would receive from the hon. member for Taunton. Then it was, that, seconded by the hon. member for Coventry, who opened the debate of this evening, he declared, that, by the end of the two years which I proposed to allow before the prohibition should finally cease, the silk trade would be destroyed.

This delay I now consider to have been the greatest error that was then committed, and the origin of our present difficulty, as far as this trade is concerned. "Those," said the hon. member for Taunton, "who propose this new plan, are completely ruining the silk manufacture of England. The moment this plan is promulgated, the great object of all who have capitals embarked in the manufacture will be, to disentangle those capitals; and those who have no capital, except their labour, will be left to struggle for themselves, and probably to perish, for want of employment."*

Such, in 1824, were the gloomy forebodings of the hon. member for Taunton. Experience has made me rather obdurate to all such prophecies; for, so many are daily made by individuals whose fears are excited, or who, when they suppose their particular interests to be at stake, attempt to excite fear in others, that I must have abandoned every measure which I have brought forward for improving our commercial policy, had I allowed myself to be acted upon by such forebodings.

Last year, for instance, I received representations from the iron trade—day after day, and month after month; but, I could not share in their alarms. I must state this, however, with one exception. There exists in this country one considerable establishment, in which iron is smelted by charcoal in great perfection, but at a heavy expense. This iron is held in equal estimation with the best from Sweden; but there was reason to apprehend, that it could not, under the reduced duty, maintain itself in competition with the latter. The establishment in question belongs to a most respectable and scientific gentleman, well known to many members of this House —Dr. Ainslie. Having heard his statement, I told him that, although I could not alter a general measure to meet one particular case, I would endeavour to devise some other mode of relief, if he should be overwhelmed by the competition.

And, what does the House think has been the result? Sir, within the last fortnight, that respectable individual has sent me word, through an hon. member of this House, not only that his fears have not been realized, but that my most sanguine hopes had been confirmed—that his trade, in fact, had in no degree suffered by those very measures, which he apprehended would have been fatal to it; and that it was, upon the whole, in a very flourishing state.

Let us now see how far the predictions of the hon. member for Taunton, and the hon. member for Coventry, have been realized. These predictions were, that the silk trade would be annihilated, in the course of the two years allowed to the manufacturers to prepare for the change.

The bill passed this House in the Spring of 1824; and, during the rest of that year,

* Parliamentary Debates, Vol. x. p. 817.

the silk trade went on flourishing and increasing, in the face of this threatened annihilation. In the Spring of 1825, there prevailed a degree of excitement—a spirit of speculation—an extension of demand in this manufacture—to a greater degree than had ever been witnessed before, in almost any branch of trade. It was in 1825, that so many new factories were erected; so many new mills set at work: so many new looms occupied. The old mills were not sufficient: many new ones were raised; the erection of each of which, I am assured, did not cost less than from 10,000*l.* to 15,000*l.*: and several of these new mills have not even yet been roofed in.

Thus, at the very time when, to satisfy the prediction of the hon. member for Taunton, this trade should have been in a state of rapid decline, the manufacturers were building to an excess that had never been equalled in the periods of their greatest prosperity.

The hon. and learned member for Lincoln has alluded to the present condition of the town of Macclesfield. I know what misfortunes and bankruptcies have occurred there, and I feel the deepest and most undissembled sorrow for the sufferings of that population. I am aware of their distressed state at this moment. But I cannot help thinking, that the hon. and learned member, in stating their situation, should also have stated some of the circumstances which have aggravated, if not created, their present difficulties; for, certain it is, that the spirit of speculation has, in that town, been carried to the greatest extravagance. According to the last census in 1821, the whole population of Macclesfield amounted to 17,746 souls. Now, I will suppose that, between that year and the year 1825, it increased to 20,000. What, then, in that year, was the demand for additional labour, in the silk manufacture alone of that town? I have seen, and many other gentlemen have no doubt seen, in a Macclesfield newspaper, of the 19th of February 1825, the following advertisement:—"To overseers, guardians of the poor, and families desirous of settling in Macclesfield. Wanted immediately, from four to five thousand persons," [Loud cries of hear, hear!]. The House may well express their surprise; but, I beseech their attention to the description of persons required by this advertisement —"from seven to twenty years of age" —so that the silk manufacturers were content to receive children of the tender age of only seven years—"to be employed in the throwing and manufacturing of silk. The great increase of the trade having caused a great scarcity of workmen, it is suggested, that this is a most favourable opportunity for persons with large families, and overseers who wish to put out children" (children of seven years of age!) as apprentices, to ensure them a comfortable livelihood. "Application to be made, if by letter post paid, to the printer of this paper."

Humanity is not the least remarkable part of this precious document; and the House will not fail to observe, how admirably the cruelty of confining children of seven years of age to labour in a silk mill, for twelve or fifteen hours out of the four-and-twenty, is tempered, by the inducement to parents to provide for their families for life. What sort of provision that has been, the present wretched state of those helpless infants will best evince. And here I cannot help observing, that, at the very time such an invitation was sent forth to overseers and parents, by the owners of silk-mills, this House was very properly occupied in passing a bill, to prevent the employment of children under nine years of age in cotton factories.

Very soon after this advertisement, and before the mills were finished, in which these children were to be immured, there appeared, I have been assured, another advertisement, nearly in the same extravagant style:—"Wanted to be built immediately one thousand houses!"—doubtless to contain five thousand new inhabitants. Yet, all this took place in the year 1825; just one year, according to the honourable member for Taunton, before the silk trade was to expire for ever. I ask, then, what weight can be given to the predictions of those, who, in the face of these striking facts, continue to assert, that the silk trade of this country will be annihilated before the end of the next twelve months? Can any man wonder, after such an enormous extent of speculation—after such inhuman efforts to induce so many destitute children to flock into the manufactories—after such an influx of population—can any man, I say, wonder—all branches of this trade being now in a stagnant state—at most of these newcomers being out of work at Macclesfield—or, at the fact stated by the hon. and learned member for Lincoln—his hair almost standing on end with horror, "that eleven orders for the removal of as

many paupers, had been made out in one week?"

Under ordinary circumstances, it could scarcely have been expected, that the silk manufacture alone could have formed an exception to the general re-action which has followed over-trading and speculation in every other branch of commerce; but, under the circumstances of peculiar excitement which I have now stated, it would, indeed, have been matter of surprise, had it escaped its full share of the common pressure.

Sir, I feel that, upon this occasion, a heavy burthen is imposed upon me. I feel that I have not only to defend myself from the attack of the hon. member for Lincoln, but to say something in behalf of my right hon. colleagues;—something in vindication of the House itself, for the course which they have pursued, in the adoption of the system of commercial policy which we recommended.

As the whole of that system has been so vigorously attacked, I shall, I trust, be excused, if I touch, very briefly, upon the proceedings of the last session of parliament: when, in furtherance of that system, and with the cordial concurrence of this House, I brought forward measures of a more general nature than the silk bill of the preceding session; inasmuch as they went to effect an important, and more extensive change, in the colonial, as well as in the commercial policy of the country. The colonial part of the subject had not, I admit, been much pressed upon his majesty's government, either by representations in this House, or in discussion out of doors. But, there are occasions on which it is the duty of a vigilant government, instead of waiting for such pressure, to watch the signs of the times, and to accommodate their policy to those changes in the world, under the continued operation of which, a blind adherence to our former system would no longer be either safe or expedient. Upon this principle, I shall be ready to vindicate the alterations, great as they are, in the policy of our colonial commerce, whenever those alterations may be called in question; but as, hitherto, they have not been attacked in this House, and as they received the special approbation of the hon. member for Taunton, I shall now say no more upon that part of the subject.

With respect to the alterations in our general commercial system, however extensive in their application, what were the objects which they embraced? They went to the removal of useless and inconvenient restrictions, to the doing away of prohibitions, and to the lowering of duties so excessive, as to be in fact prohibitory on the productions of other countries—restrictions, prohibitions, and duties, which, without benefit, nay, highly mischievous to ourselves, have produced all the evil effects, and given rise, in other parts of the world, to the retaliatory efforts of foreign governments, to put down the commerce of this country. These were some of the bad consequences justly attributed to our exclusive system by the hon. member for Taunton and the merchants of London, in the speech and petition to which I have so often referred.

And here I cannot but express my astonishment, that gentlemen (I am now speaking of persons out of doors)—who must be better informed—whose sincerity I cannot doubt—but whose judgment, in this respect, seems to be most unaccountably perverted—impute all the prevailing distress, as well as the derangement in the foreign exchanges, which preceded, and, in a great degree, produced that distress, to this lowering of excessive duties, and removal of unnecessary prohibitions.

I have called for the production of a paper, which has not yet been printed, but which will, I hope, in the course of twenty-four hours, be in the hands of every hon. member—for the purpose of showing what have been, during the last year, the actual imports of most of the principal articles, the duty on which has been materially reduced. From this document, it will be manifest, that, although there has been some increase of import in most of those articles, in none has it been carried to any great extent. In manufactured goods—cottons, woollens, linens, &c. the increased import of the whole does not exceed a few thousand pounds. And yet, in opposition to this decisive evidence, there are those, I understand, who have had dealings for millions in foreign loans, who, to facilitate the payments of those loans, and other financial operations of foreign governments, have sent million after million of our gold coin, drawn from the Bank of England, to the bank of Paris, and who, in the face of such gigantic operations—the benefit of which to this country (whatever it may be to themselves) it is difficult to conceive—have been pleased to attribute the unfavourable state of the

foreign exchanges, during the last summer and autumn, to the commercial measures adopted by parliament in the preceding session.

I am happy to say, that where the duties have been lowered upon articles of consumption, the result has hitherto fully borne me out in all my anticipations. In the six months which immediately followed the reduction of the duty on coffee, the consumption of that article has nearly doubled, without occasioning any decrease in the consumption of tea. In wine, the duty upon which, we were told, ought not to have been reduced without some reciprocity to the productions of this country, the consumption has also increased in an equal degree. And thus it will appear, that the same amount of revenue has been attained by the government from diminished burthens; thereby leaving greater means of comfort and enjoyment to the people.

I come now to the real jet of the silk question; and which—I say it with all due deference to the hon. mover and seconder of the present motion—has not been, in the slightest degree, touched upon by either of them.

It is admitted, on all hands, that silk is an article which can be easily smuggled; and, that it is now smuggled to a very considerable extent, in spite of all the preventive measures that have, from time to time, been adopted. Now, the object of the British manufacturer is, as much as possible, to shut out the competition of his foreign rival. If smuggling could be prevented, I would concede to him, that prohibition would be most effectual to this object. But, if it cannot, what is the advantage of prohibition over a protecting duty of 30 per cent? I say, of 30 per cent, because I never yet conversed with a single merchant or manufacturer, who did not admit, that if a higher protecting duty were imposed, the supply of foreign silk goods would be thrown into the hands of the smuggler.

The question, then, looking at it practically, is this—In what degree is prohibition better, as against smuggling, than a well-regulated duty?—by which I mean a duty sufficient to protect the British manufacturer, without being so high as to afford a premium to the smuggler.

In the first place, it cannot be denied, that the feelings of mankind are more likely to restrain them from committing a fraud, than from violating a Custom-house prohibition. I am sure it will be conceded to me, that many honourable persons, who would not, for any temptation, be parties to a contrivance to evade a tax, and thereby to rob the public revenue, would feel very little scruple, in wearing an article that is absolutely prohibited, and the introduction of which is not in opposition to any moral duty.

So far, then, the argument, in support of the assertion, that a prohibitory law is the best check upon smuggling, makes directly the other way, and is in favour of protecting duties.

But, the great, indeed the only argument in favour of prohibition in preference to a protecting duty is this—that after the forbidden goods have been landed in this country, and when they are in the possession of individuals, even for their own use or consumption, you may follow them into private dwellings, nay, into the very pockets of the wearers, and seize them upon their persons, in the king's name, at the bare suggestion of any common informer.

To what does this power of seizing and examining all who may be suspected of possessing prohibited articles, amount? Sir, it amounts to this—that if any man—no matter what may be his rank, be he the humblest peasant or the highest peer in the realm—be suspected of wearing or possessing a silk handkerchief of foreign manufacture, he is liable to have it taken from his neck or his pocket, and to have his house ransacked, from the garret to the cellar, in quest of contraband articles. If, without such a subsidiary regulation as this—a regulation which encourages the worst passions, engenders the most appalling perjury and crime, and which opens so wide a door either to fraud and collusion, or to intimidation and personal violence—prohibition cannot be sustained; then, Sir, I say, in preference to such a system, let us in God's name have a well-regulated duty.

And here I hope I may be permitted to digress for one moment, to ask, how a great constitutional lawyer — a staunch advocate for the popular character of our constitution — a zealous stickler for the inalienable rights of the people—a watchful guardian of the sanctity of an Englishman's private abode;—how he could so entirely discipline and subdue his warm and boasted feelings for the liberty of the subject, as to pour forth the declamatory harangue which we have heard this night

from the learned member for Lincoln, in favour of this system of prohibition?

But, even with the aid of this power of search and seizure, is prohibition an effectual remedy against smuggling? I have lately taken some pains to ascertain the quantity of smuggled silks that has been seized, inland, throughout the kingdom, during the last ten years: and I find that the whole does not exceed 5,000*l*. a-year. I have endeavoured, on the other hand, to get an account of the quantity of silk goods actually smuggled into this country. Any estimate of this quantity must be very vague; but I have been given to understand, that the value of such goods as are regularly entered at the Custom-houses of France, for exportation to this country, is from 100,000*l*. to 150,000*l*. a-year; and this, of course, is exclusive of the far greater supply which is poured in, through all the channels of smuggling, without being subjected to any entry. In fact, to such an extent is this illicit trade carried on, that there is scarcely a haberdasher's shop, in the smallest village of the kingdom, in which prohibited silks are not sold; and that in the face of day, and to a very considerable extent.

The hon. member for Coventry has mentioned the silk goods from India, as those against which any thing but prohibition would prove an unavailing protection. Now, in my opinion, it is scarcely possible to conceive a stronger case than those very silks furnish against the hon. member's own argument. I believe it is universally known, that a large quantity of Bandana handkerchiefs are sold, every year, for exportation, by the East-India company. But, does any gentleman suppose, that these Bandanas are sent to the continent, for the purpose of remaining there? No such thing! They are sold at the Company's sales to the amount of 800,000 or a million of handkerchiefs each year, at the rate of about four shillings each. They are immediately shipped off for Hamburgh, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Ostend, or Guernsey—and, from thence, they nearly all illicitly find their way back to this country.

Mark, then, the effect of this beautiful system—the system so lauded by the hon. member for Lincoln. These Bandanas, which had previously been sold, for exportation, at 4*s*., are finally distributed, in retail, to the people of England, at the rate of about 8*s*. each; and the result of their prohibition is to levy upon the consumer a tax, and to give to those who live by the evasion of your law, a bounty of 4*s*. upon each handkerchief sold in this country.

That nearly all the Bandanas sold for exportation are re-imported and used in this country, is a fact not denied, even by those who are now most clamorous for prohibition. In a printed letter from a manufacturer of Macclesfield to the marquis of Lansdown, I find the following anecdote: "It is the custom, in the parterres of the theatres in France, to secure the place, by tying a pocket handkerchief on the seat. I had the curiosity, at the Théâtre François, to notice the appearance of them; and, out of twenty-five, immediately around me, there was not one silk handkerchief." I should have little doubt, if a similar custom prevailed in the pit of our theatre, that this accurate observer would find most of the seats decorated with handkerchiefs of prohibited silk. Nay, Sir, if strangers were at this moment ordered to withdraw from the gallery; and every member were called upon (of course in secret committee) to produce his handkerchief, with the understanding, that those who had not prohibited handkerchiefs in their pockets were obliged to inform against those who had—I am inclined to believe, that the informers would be in a small majority. Upon every information laid under this prohibitory law, the chances are, that the informer and the constable have Bandanas round their necks, and that the magistrate, who hears the charge, has one in his pocket.

Upon the motion of this evening, then, we have to make our choice between a moderate protecting duty which can be collected, and is likely to be available; and the going back to the system of prohibition which I have shown to be productive of such mischievous consequences.

But, since the repeal of the old law, a further difficulty has occurred in respect to prohibition. Two years ago, when a piece of silk was seized as foreign, the British manufacturer could, upon inspecting it, at once say, "I know, and can prove, that this is not of the manufacture of this kingdom." If asked, "What is your proof?" he would reply, "The superior quality and workmanship of the article: it is quite impossible that any thing equal to it should have been manufactured in England. It wants that stamp of slovenliness and indifference to improvement, which is the sure characteristic of

all silk goods made at home." This is a very natural answer for monopoly to make, but it comes with a bad grace from a British manufacturer.

But, it may be asked, if excellence of fabric was, at that time, the proof that the article was not British, why is it not so still? I shall give the best answer to this question, by stating what has recently occurred.

Soon after the alteration of our law, an extensive French manufacturer removed from Lyons to this country. He brought with him his looms and his patterns. Under his management and superintendence two establishments were formed, one in Spitalfields, the other at Manchester. At both of these places he set weavers to work, fully satisfied that a duty of 30 per cent would afford him sufficient protection. His improved methods (with sorrow I state it) excited the jealousy, and drew down upon him the persecution, of the English manufacturers. They charged this industrious foreigner, boldly and rashly, and, as in the end it was proved, most unjustly, with carrying on his trade here, merely as a cloak to cover the smuggling of foreign manufactured goods. In their mortification at his success they even went the length of charging my hon. friend, the secretary of the Treasury, and the whole board of Customs, with being cognizant of the fact, and parties to this nefarious scheme for ruining the silk trade of England. This accusation was not merely insinuated in whispers: it was contained in a published report, inserted in the newspapers, and thus conveyed from one end of the kingdom to the other.

This was not to be endured. The Treasury determined to sift the matter to the bottom. They knew that, neither at the board of Treasury, nor at the board of Customs, could any countenance or facility have been given to smuggling; but they thought it not impossible that this French house might have been guilty of the irregularities imputed to them, and that these irregularities might have been connived at by some of the inferior officers. The accusers, therefore, were called upon to substantiate their charge, and were distinctly told that the inquiry should be directed in whatever mode they might point out as most effectual. They said, the clearest proof would probably be found in the books of the party accused, if they could be got at. The books could not, certainly, be inspected without his consent. Did he hesitate on this point? So far from it, that his immediate reply was, "You are welcome to inspect all the books of our house; and, that there may be no suspicion of garbling or concealment, let an officer go with me instanter, and they shall all be brought here (to the Treasury), in a hackney-coach."

This was accordingly done. His books were subjected to a rigid examination. Every transaction connected with his business was found regular—the names of the weavers employed by him, the work which they had in hand, and their places of residence were all duly entered. Taking with them a plan of Spitalfields, and without the possibility of previous notice or concert, proper persons went round to the particular houses which these books had pointed out; and, in every instance, they found the names of the men at work, and the goods upon which they were working, to correspond with the entries in the books.

All this was most satisfactory to the Treasury and the Customs. But the accusers persevered in their charge. They insisted, that the whole was a concerted plot; and that many pieces of silk in the warehouse of this foreigner, which he asserted that he had manufactured here, were, in truth, the productions of France.

The Treasury, in consequence, resolved to sift the matter still further; and again it was left to the accusers to point out the mode. In order to prosecute the inquiry, they selected from their own body the person whom they considered the most skilled in the knowledge requisite for the detection of such articles as might be contraband. And what, towards him, was the conduct of the party accused? "Go to my warehouse," said the Frenchman, "turn over all my goods; select from among them whatever pieces you please; and, on the proof of their being of English or of French manufacture let my guilt or innocence be finally established."

The offer was accepted. The person employed by the British manufacturers turned over and over several hundred pieces of silk; and at length, after the whole ordeal was passed, the board of Customs made known the result in an official report, which they transmitted to the Treasury. That report I hold in my hand. What is the substance of it? Why, that thirty-seven pieces had been selected

by this agent of the accusers as being, beyond all doubt, of French manufacture. What followed? These thirty-seven pieces were seized, and the Frenchman was put upon his proof that they were made in this country. How did he prove it? By producing, one after another, the very men by whom every one of these thirty-seven pieces had been made; who proved, upon their oaths, in the most irrefragable manner, that every inch of these goods had been woven by themselves—Where? Not at Lyons—not in France—but in Spitalfields and Manchester!

I have stated these facts with feelings, I own, bordering on disgust. I cannot but think it humiliating, if not discreditable to my countrymen, that an unprotected foreigner should have been maligned and persecuted, instead of receiving countenance and encouragement for having transported his capital and skill to this country, and for being the first to set the example of great and successful improvement in our silk manufacture.

But how does this detail, into which I have entered, bear upon the present argument? It shows, in the clearest manner, that, if you continue to seize silk goods, in private houses, in shops, or upon individuals, you have now lost your former test, by which you could prove them to be of foreign origin. The most expert judge of such articles, it is now legally proved, cannot discriminate between the British and the foreign manufacture. Prohibition, therefore, has lost its only recommendation; it retains no advantage over a well-regulated duty.

But appeals have been made to our compassion; and our feelings have been alarmed by the statement, that above 500,000 individuals are at present engaged in the silk trade, and that ruin must inevitably be entailed on this large and meritorious class of the community, if the old law be not restored.

Now, supposing the number of persons employed in the silk manufactory to amount to 500,000—their wages, I assume, cannot be less, one with another, than 10*s.* a-week for each person. I have been told, indeed, that a considerable portion of this number are children, some of whom do not receive more than 1*s.* 6*d.* a-week; and, for this pittance, the hours of work in the mills, when the trade was brisk, I have been assured, were, from five in the morning till eight or nine at night. If this be so, let us not talk of the difference in the expense of labour between this country and France. Will it be said, that a French child cannot earn in the silk manufactory 1*s.* 6*d.* a-week; and that, without working from fourteen to fifteen hours out of the four-and-twenty? Certainly not. Supposing, however, the average earnings of these 500,000 persons (an exaggerated number I am convinced) to be 10*s.* a-week, thirteen millions of money would then be the annual amount of wages alone in this manufacture. To this are to be added, the interest on capital, and the price of the raw material: so that the value of the goods sold could not be less than eighteen or twenty millions sterling. This, however, I consider too high a calculation. The Lords' report estimates the whole amount at only ten millions; but, allowing for increased consumption since 1821, it may, perhaps, be fairly rated at twelve or fourteen millions, exclusive of the quantity smuggled in from the continent.

If, then, fourteen millions of silk goods are about the annual consumption of this kingdom, what would happen, if, according to the predictions of the honourable member for Taunton, the British manufacture should be annihilated after next July? We should not, I take it for granted, consume a less quantity of silk goods: the only change would be, that we should have them, as it is alleged, of a better quality, and at a less price. But, all the goods so consumed, would, in this supposition, have paid a duty of 30 per cent on their importation; and the produce of that duty, consequently, would exceed four millions sterling. This large sum would be levied without, in the smallest degree, abridging the comfort or enjoyment of any other class of the community. It would bring with it no increase of burthen upon the consumer of silk goods, and consequently no diminution of his means of consuming other articles. It would simply be the premium of monopoly transferred to the Exchequer; and the capital, for which this monopoly was created, would be set free, to give employment to other branches of industry.

Such, certainly, would be the ultimate result, if the speculative fears of the silk trade should be realized. But, of such an issue, I am persuaded there is no risk. The whole consumption of silk goods in France is not equal to the consumption in England. Now, supposing, when the bill

comes into operation, there should be a greatly increased demand in this country for French silks—this new and additional demand would produce a corresponding advance in the price of the goods, and in the wages of labour, in France. To a certain extent there may be such a demand, especially at the first opening of the trade; but, I am convinced that, with the attention to economy which competition excites, with our improved machinery, our industry and ingenuity, and, perhaps, with the lowered prices of labour and the means of subsistence—a protecting duty of 30 per cent will be found to be sufficient.

The House is called upon, by the motion of the hon. member for Coventry, "to inquire." Has it never inquired before? Has the House of Lords entered into no investigation of the subject? And, did not that investigation take place at a period when taxation and prices were very considerably higher than at present? The country, too, at that time, was labouring under much distress; and the silk manufacture was suffering its full share of the existing difficulties. Was that inquiry loosely conducted? Certainly not. A noble marquis (Lansdown) presided over the labours of the committee, alike distinguished for talent, for diligence, and for the soundness of his views on all subjects connected with the commercial policy of the country. It was the opinion of that committee, after taking a mass of evidence on oath, that a duty of 15 per cent would be an adequate protection, instead of a duty of double that amount, under which the experiment is now to be made.

I have stated, too much at length I fear, the grounds on which it appears to me, that this House ought not to entertain the present motion. This statement, I feel, must have appeared unnecessary to those who think with me on the subject of our commercial policy; and I dare not hope that it has made much impression on those who are the declared advocates of the restrictive system—those who belong to the same school of political economy as the hon. baronet, the member for Staffordshire. In his enmity to all improvement, he told us the other evening, that the ministers of the present day were only fit to form a council for the island of Laputa. Since this intimation of the hon. baronet's wish to see us banished to that island, I have turned in my own mind what recommendation I could take with me to that land of philosophers. Not a letter from the hon. baronet, I can assure him; for he has given us to understand that, in mind, at least, he belongs to the Brobdignagian age of this country. But I think I have hit upon that which would infallibly make my fortune at Laputa: I will tell the hon. baronet what it is.

At the time of the great Bullion controversy in 1810-1811, the main question in dispute turned upon what was the real Standard of our money. We wild theorists said, as our simple forefathers had always said before us, that the standard was, and could be, nothing else than the weight and fineness of the gold or silver in the coin of the realm, according to the commands of the sovereign, specified in the indentures of the Mint. Had this definition been admitted by the practical men there would at once have been an end of the contested point—whether our then currency was or was not depreciated. But, for that very reason, this definition was denied by all who maintained the negative of that question. More than a hundred pamphlets were published on that side, containing as many different definitions of the standard. Fifteen of these definitions, most in vogue at the time, I have since retained, as a curiosity to laugh at: but they may now, perhaps, be turned to a more valuable purpose. Of that number I only recollect three at this moment. The first defined the standard to be "the abstract pound sterling." This had great success till another practical writer proved, that the standard was the "ideal unit." These two practical standards were, however, finally superseded by a third, of which the definition was, "a sense of value in currency (paper), in reference to commodities." This last standard was at once so perfectly tangible and clearly intelligible, that I consider it as the parent of the famous Resolution of this House, by which the question was to be finally set at rest.

Now, if I should take with me to Laputa this little, but invaluable collection of definitions, I have not the slightest doubt that my pretensions to have the whole monetary system of that island placed under my direction—to be master of the mint—governor of the bank—and superintendent of all the country banks—would be immediately and generally admitted. It is true we have had no authentic account of the progress of political science in that celebrated island for about a cen-

tury past; but, it is scarcely to be imagined that it can have been so rapid, as to enable their greatest philosophers to challenge the pre-eminence of these definitions, on the score of abstraction, metaphysics, and absurdity: and, at any rate, if the philosophers should cabal against me, the practical men could not fail to be on my side.

I am not aware, Sir, that I have omitted to notice any of the objections which have been urged against the important changes lately made by Parliament in our commercial system. That these changes are extensive, as well as important, I readily admit. Whether they will work ultimately for good, or for evil, it becomes not fallible man to pronounce an over peremptory opinion. That the expectation of those who proposed them, was, that they would work for good, no man will do us the injustice to deny. That up to this hour I am fortified in that expectation, by the deductions of reason in my own mind, by the authority of all who are most competent to form a dispassionate opinion upon the subject, by the beneficial result of every thing which has hitherto been done, for giving greater freedom to commerce in this country, and by the experience of the opposite effect which vexatious and unnecessary restraints are daily producing in other countries—is what I can most solemnly affirm.

I make this declaration, I can assure you, Sir, in all sincerity of heart, and, as far as I know myself, without any mixture of false pride, or any mistaken feeling of obstinate adherence to consistency. I am the more anxious to make this declaration, in the face of the House, and of the world, because of late I have been assailed, and distressed, I will own, by ungenerous appeals to my feelings, calling upon me to commune with my conscience and my God, and to say, whether I am under no visitations of compunction and remorse, at having thrown so many persons out of bread, in the trial of a rash experiment, and in the pursuit of a hollow theory. Good God! Sir, that man must have a heart of stone, who can witness without sympathy and the greatest pain, the distress which now, unfortunately, exists in most of our other great manufactures, as well as in that of silk. But, whilst I hope that I am not wanting in the duties and feelings of a man—I have also a duty to perform as a minister. If immediate relief be, in a great degree, out of our power, it the more becomes us, as the guardians of all that is most valuable in civilised society, to trace the causes of the present calamities, and to prevent, if possible, their recurrence.—It is on this principle, that I am anxious to put an end to a system of currency, which leads to ruinous fluctuations in trade, and in the price of all commodities; which, whether in excitement or depression, is alike undermining the sober habits, and the moral feelings of the community; which confounds honest industry with unprincipled gambling: which injures the poor man in the earnings of his labour, and takes from the rich man all security in his property—a system which creates delusive hopes, only to terminate in aggravated disappointments—of which every succeeding convulsion must add to our inability to bear it—and of which the inevitable tendency is, to drive capital and industry to other countries; not in Europe only, but even across the Atlantic. The growing dread of instability here, the growing assurance of increased stability in those countries, would ultimately produce this transfer; and, with it, the further transfer of the rank and power which England has hitherto maintained among the nations of the world.

If I have ventured to intrude upon the House by any allusion to my personal feelings, they will, I trust, make some allowances for the provocation which I have received. This is the only place in which I can properly reply to the unmanly appeals which have been made to me through other channels. Such appeals, however painful to receive, have no influence on my conduct; neither can they detract from the sanguine hope which I entertain of better prospects and increased happiness for my country. I hailed with great delight, the other evening, the assurance of the right hon. member for Knaresborough (Mr. Tierney), that he saw nothing in our present difficulties to create despondency or alarm. In this sentiment I most entirely concur. The existing pressure may, for a short time, bear heavily upon the springs of our prosperity; but if we pursue a temperate course, there is nothing to fear, and every thing to hope, for our future progress. With confidence I cling to that cheering hope; and without looking forward to a long life, I trust that I shall witness its realization.

Whether in a public station or in retire-

ment, my greatest happiness will be to feel assured, that the power and resources of this country have been increased by those measures of commercial policy which it has fallen to my lot to submit to parliament.

That such will be their ultimate result, is my firm and conscientious conviction; and, in that conviction, I claim for those measures the continual support of this House.

Mr. *Baring* rose amidst cries of "adjourn," and "go on." The hon. member said, that at that late hour he could not hope for the attention of the House, if he were to attempt to follow in detail the many topics on which the right hon. gentleman had touched in his very able speech. He would, therefore, compress his observations into as narrow a compass as possible. Here the cries for an adjournment became very general, and the hon. member seemed unwilling to proceed, when

Mr. *Canning* said, that if the question before the House were confined merely to the motion of the hon. member for Coventry, there could be no difficulty in disposing of it on that night; but, as the eloquent and powerful speech of his right hon. friend had—most happily, he would say, for the country—involved the whole of the principles on which the commerce of the country was to be conducted in future, he thought it would be impossible to conclude the discussion that night. He would therefore move that the debate be adjourned till to-morrow.

The motion of adjournment was put, and agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, February 24.

SILK TRADE.] On the motion for resuming the adjourned debate, on Mr. Ellice's motion, "That a Select Committee be appointed, to inquire into and examine the statements contained in the various petitions from persons engaged in the silk manufacture; and to report their opinion and observations thereon to the House,"

Mr. *Baring* rose. He felt, he said, the disadvantage under which he laboured in addressing the House upon this subject, after the able and eloquent speech of his right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade. It was not necessary for him to state any opinion as to the ability and eloquence of that speech. It had been felt by the House, and universally admitted. But he trusted the House would favour him with a patient hearing, for a short time, while he attempted to show, that able and eloquent as that speech was, it touched very little upon the particular question immediately before the House; namely, the silk trade. His right hon. friend began by complaining of the imputations of insensibility to the distresses of the country, which he imagined had been cast upon him. Now, he knew nobody on his side of the House who had thrown out any such imputations, in the sense in which his right hon. friend seemed to understand them. When they said, that ministers were not sensible of the situation of the country, what they meant was, not that ministers were not capable of feeling for the distress of the country, but that they were not aware of its intensity. He was perfectly willing to do justice to the motives by which government had been induced to enter upon the course they were pursuing. He believed firmly, that they were actuated by a strong and imperative sense of duty. His right hon. friend, in the exposition of the general view which he took of this subject on the previous evening, had referred to a petition which he (Mr. Baring) had presented to that House some years ago, and to the observations he had made on that occasion. As he was not in the habit of speaking with much preparation or from written documents, and had never but thrice in his life read the reports of his speeches, he would not hold himself answerable for what might be ascribed to him; but, he was quite ready to admit, that in what his right hon. friend had quoted from the report of his speech, in 1820, there was nothing that he was disposed to deny, or that he had any reason to suppose he had not stated. There was nothing in that speech that he would not stand up, on the present occasion, and contend for, as decidedly as he did then. At that time the country was emerging from the most extraordinary war it had ever passed through. In every branch of the law, relative to customs, trade, or finance, the utmost complexity and confusion prevailed. The embarrassments that resulted from these evils, could be understood only by those who had actually suffered from them. It was impossible for any merchant to know how his business ought to be conducted.* The

undivided study of a man's life was insufficient to enable him to know what was the state of the law applicable to the trade in which he was concerned. The objectionable system then existing had grown up under a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Rose), now no more, who, though with the best intentions, had, unfortunately for the country, presided for a great length of time over that department. He (Mr. Baring) was certainly one who called for a system of more simplicity, and generally for the adoption of the principles of free trade. In the part he had then taken, there was nothing inconsistent with his present views, as he would clearly demonstrate.—His right hon. friend had made some severe remarks on what he had termed the errors of practical men. He (Mr. Baring) regretted much to observe, that latterly there was more personal irritation and animosity mixed up with the discussion of questions, concerning the silk, cotton, or woollen trade, than he had witnessed on the most violent party question that had ever agitated the country. Whether it was that the absence of party had transferred these feelings to questions of a nature otherwise so little likely to excite them, he knew not; but the fact was, that no question relative to the trade or currency of the country, could be considered without ebullitions of anger and personal hostility. His right hon. friend, he was bound in truth to say, had, under the influence of those feelings, made some imputations of the most severe, and, as he would prove before he sat down, of the most groundless character, against individuals engaged in the silk trade, whom he knew to be the most honourable and respectable men living. He would satisfy the House, that they had done nothing in the management of their business, but what they ought to have done. With regard to the principles of free trade, he contended, that the support he had given to them did not exclude the adaptation of those principles to the particular circumstances in which the country might be placed. The removal of the prohibitive system, in order to the ultimate establishment of perfect freedom of action, was not in the slightest degree incompatible with a case of special temporary exception, where the necessity could be clearly made out. He was aware that the burthen of proof lay with those who called for the exception. But, it was not in the power of parliament to lay down a rule without an exception, when the state of things in which that rule was to be applied was itself an exception to all ordinary rules. Was not the state of this country one of extreme complexity in all its parts? The answer lately returned to a question respecting coal carried coastwise, was an evidence of the intricate condition of our internal affairs. It was impossible to sit five minutes in that House, and not be convinced, that no particular rule could be applied to the circumstances of this country. Nobody rejoiced more than he, that a professorship had been founded in the University of Oxford for the teaching of the science of political economy. He hoped that a similar course would be followed in the new University of London. It was desirable that the country should be more generally imbued with sound principles than it was at present. He was not so sanguine, however, as to expect that the diffusion of information would prevent endless discussions on that very difficult science. If the works already written on that subject were opened, the doctrines of each would be found to differ from almost every other. Nothing like agreement was to be met with among its professors. So far from their demonstrations being characterised by mathematical rigour and precision, all was vagueness and uncertainty. Hardly any two political economists had written on the Corn laws, between whom there were not radical differences on the most fundamental points. When these learned persons had arrived at some certain truth, on which they were agreed among themselves, he would advise practical men, as they were called, to give way; but, until then, he would beg leave to suggest, that the political economists should refrain from abusing the practical man, and treating him as the greatest fool in existence, because he proved, by facts, that, though the result should, according to theory, be as they stated, it was not always so. His right hon. friend had entertained the House, at some length, in pointing out the inconsistencies in his (Mr. Baring's) conduct. He trusted that his right hon. friend would not suppose him wanting in personal respect, if he presumed to call the attention of the House to the inconsistencies of a more learned doctor—he alluded to the right hon. gentleman himself. When the petition was presented in 1820, he admitted that he held opinions

decidedly in favour of free trade. He was not aware of having abandoned them, except as to the silk trade. In all other respects, he was the humble follower of the right hon. gentleman. He differed from him as to the currency, only as to the time. He wished to reach the same point; but he thought the right hon. gentleman was for travelling too fast. He (Mr. Baring) would not start until the country had acquired more steadiness and confidence. As to all other points, he was perfectly of the same opinion as he was in 1820. But what was the case with his right hon. friend? He would not refer to any trifling or insignificant question; he was about to speak of a subject of great and leading interest. In 1810, when the country was engaged in an arduous struggle for its very existence —God forbid that any man now living should see such another—when we were borne down with an immense expenditure, and had hardly a guinea left in circulation, the right hon. gentleman spoke and voted in that House, and wrote pamphlets in favour of the principle of returning in two years, whatever might happen, to cash payments.

Mr. *Huskisson*.—Yes, whether in war or in peace.

Mr. *Baring* continued: And at that very moment, though the country was in a state of perfect despair as to the return of peace, his right hon. friend, as he had just avowed, was speaking, writing, and voting, for the return to cash payments in two years. Was that, he would ask his right hon. friend, a vote which, under the same circumstances, he would give again.

Mr. *Huskisson*.—Entirely.

Mr. *Baring*.—If such were the case, he would leave his right hon. friend to maintain it as he could; but any man who mixed up a little practical experience with his theory, would see the absurdity of such a position. If any gentleman wished for proof, that his right hon. friend was not a safe pilot for the vessel of the state in a time of commotion and storm, he would find it in his right hon. friend's recent declaration, that he was prepared to assert the entire maintenance of a system in time of war, to which they had compelled the Bank to return with extreme difficulty, and not with any thing like complete success, in time of peace. He had no right, therefore, to charge his right hon. friend with inconsistency on that head; but his consistency, if consistent he was, proved that he was any thing but a trustworthy pilot in an emergency like the present. The second point on which he should attempt to convict the right hon. gentleman of inconsistency was connected with the opinion which he had advanced in 1815, upon the subject of the Corn-laws. His right hon. friend was then the advocate for advancing the protecting duty on corn from 66*s*. to 80*s*. per quarter. He (Mr. Baring) had opposed that advance as strenuously as he could; and, although he had voted in a small minority, upon that occasion, it was a vote of which he was not inclined to repent. Would his right hon. friend say the same of the vote which he then gave? Would he tell them, that he was prepared to abide by that vote as entirely as he was prepared to abide by his vote on the bullion question? He should be very much mistaken if his right hon. friend did not tell them at an early period, that, instead of advancing the protecting duty on corn, the real question for the consideration of parliament was, how far it could be prudently reduced. He would not press more upon that point at present, as it was one on which he should have occasion to dilate before he concluded. He now came to a part of his right hon. friend's measures, in which his inconsistency was particularly glaring, and which he alluded to with the greater readiness, as it was connected with the subject of the silk trade, which now formed the question before the House. His right hon. friend, in proposing the reduction of the duty on thrown silk from 14*s*. 8*d*. to 7*s*. 6*d*. per pound, had said, that it was necessary to continue it at that rate as a protection to the throwster. He (Mr. Baring) stated, that the other branches of the silk-trade would be sacrificed by the protection thus afforded to the throwster, and urged a further reduction. His right hon. friend had maintained a contrary opinion, and carried it by a triumphant majority. His right hon. friend, since that time, had not only seen his error, but by a Treasury minute had reduced the protecting duty from 7*s*. 6*d*. to 5*s*. per pound. What further measures his right hon. friend intended to take with it now, he did not know; for in the speech which he had made last night, there was no declaration as to what extent the throwster was to be protected, or whether he was to be protected at

all. He was practical man enough to wish, on a matter of business, to have some information contained in a speech of a minister; but his right hon. friend had scorned to give them any information, and had reduced them to the necessity of getting it from him as well as they could. He therefore again asked his right hon. friend whether, in proposing to keep the duty on thrown silk at 7*s.* 6*d.* per pound, he had not acted with a degree of haste and carelessness of which he had since repented? If his right hon. friend had done so—and it was impossible to deny that he had—if he had legislated carelessly on a case where the bread of thousands was concerned, he, for one, could not see that character of steadiness in his right hon. friend's measures, which was necessary to induce him to follow his right hon. friend blindly as a guide, and to give up his own opinions as wrong, without being convinced that they were so. He had thought it right to make these observations on the inconsistency of his right hon. friend in return for similar observations which his right hon. friend had made upon him. The petition of 1820, which had been presented by him to the House, and which had afterwards been referred to a select committee, had been productive in its results—for which he took no merit—of a series of measures which, under the guidance of his right hon. friend, had been more effectual in improving the commerce of the country than any series of measures which had ever been proposed by any former administration. The manner in which they had been carried into execution reflected great credit on his right hon. friend. He was fully sensible of his merit, and took that opportunity of publicly acknowledging it. His right hon. friend seemed to have an idea that some of his measures had produced an hostile feeling towards him among the merchants of the country. Let him dismiss it from his mind as unworthy of him and as unworthy of them. If they did not feel grateful to him for the great measures he had introduced on their behalf, they must be the most ungrateful of men. He had relieved them, with the assistance of his colleagues, from all that was objectionable in the navigation laws; he had relieved them from the ancient formalities and charges of the Custom-house; he had relieved them from transit duties, from bounties, from prohibitions; he had reduced the port charges in the port of London, and had rendered it of all the ports in Europe, that to which foreign vessels could come with the least possible charge. To sum up all in a word, it was impossible to say how much praise was due to his right hon. friend and the government, for the improvements they had introduced into our commercial system. At the same time that he said this, he felt bound to say, that the whole practical effect of their arrangements, however beautiful it might be in theory, could not be precisely known, until it was carried into execution. For instance, however fair and desirable, the reciprocity charges on shipping might appear in theory, some mistake might reasonably be suspected, when we saw how American shipping was gaining upon our own in the port of Liverpool, and Dutch and Prussian shipping in the river Thames. He did not pretend to say to what this change was to be attributed. It would appear, that if the regulation had been properly adapted to our interests, the result would have been, that at least we should have had an equal share of our own shipping employed; but the fact was, that at present it was mostly American. Under the circumstances in which the country was placed, he thought his majesty's government were pushing the abstract principles of theorists, too far. In the case of the one and two pound notes, they manifested a disposition to drive forward to their object at once, without condescending for a moment to listen to what practical men might say. A metallic currency was to be had, whatever might be the consequence. The same was the case, as to the silk trade. There also was the same disposition shewn at all risks, at the imminent hazard of throwing a large population out of bread, to rush at once to the end in view. If, on the other hand, the merchants came forward with a claim for assistance, the same spirit pervaded the councils of the Crown. No relief was to be granted, because it was contrary to the doctrines of the political economists and to right principles. The experience of practical men was as nothing in the scale. There was to be no mitigation of the pressure resulting from great changes—no exception whatever allowed. Principles were to be pushed to extremities in every case. Now, he contended, that this course was altogether wrong. There was no absurdity, to which principles, abstractedly right, would not

lead, if they were applied without any reference to the state of things in which they were to operate. On the finest principles in the world every interest in the community might be plunged in the greatest difficulties. He could not help referring to some of the extravagancies and absurdities of the writers, who were, on all hands, admitted to be among the ablest professors of the science of political economy. His late friend, Mr. Ricardo, had some of the most fanciful theories that could possibly be imagined. His notion of a compensation between the property of the country and the public debt was to be classed under that head. Yet that gentleman had always treated it seriously, as a remedy for all the evils of the country. It was a thing utterly impracticable, as every practical man in the city of London knew. Again, when Mr. Ricardo treated of the extent of capital requisite for a national bank, what could be more absurd than his scheme? He begged to be understood as casting no reproaches on the memory of that eminent individual. He wished only to show the difficulties to which too rigid an adherence to theoretical principles might lead the country. Mr. Ricardo's notion of a bank was now justly exploded; and so was his compensation between property and debt. Though there was great truth in the theory, the design was admitted to be totally incapable of execution. In the same way Mr. Malthus—a great authority in matters of political economy—had written a pamphlet to prove, that the state of the Corn-laws had nothing to do with the question of rents. This was to be paralleled only by Mr. M'Culloch's doctrine respecting Absenteeism from Ireland. Surely, if ever an absurdity had been sent forth by a learned and intelligent man, it was the doctrine—that the residence of the landlords of Ireland abroad was no injury whatever to that country. Nay, Mr. M'Culloch was of opinion, that his absence was rather a benefit than otherwise—that whether the landlord spent his income in or out of Ireland, was the same thing to his tenants? Why, then, it followed irresistibly, that if the residence of the Irish landlord at Paris was no injury to the people of Ireland, neither would it be harmful to them if the rent of Ireland was sent yearly, as tribute to the king of France, and was by him expended in his good city of Paris. This reductio ad absurdum displayed the folly of the doctrine glaringly. What was to become of a nation if its legislation was guided by theorists of this description? He trusted that the House would take these points into consideration, and would reflect on them before they consented to allow ministers to guide them entirely upon theory. He was bound, however, in candour to confess, that the errors of practical men were sometimes as absurd as those of theoretical. If the theorists would add to their theory a little practical experience; if the practical men would look a little more to first principles, and if each would act with a little less contempt for the other, he believed they would speedily come to very useful and beneficial results. He begged pardon for obtruding upon their notice these observations, which some might think foreign to the question, but which he conceived necessary to it, as the general principles on which they ought to legislate upon commercial interests had been introduced by his right hon. friend into this discussion. The government were evidently actuated by a dislike to look at practical conclusions, and by a passion for legislating upon principles alone. He wished, therefore, to caution the House upon the point, and having done so, he should now proceed to the more immediate question of the day. His hon. friend the member for Coventry, in asking them to refer this question to the consideration of a committee, disputed the principle on which the late regulations for the silk-trade were founded. That trade had been in an artificial state, and under peculiar protection, in consequence of the superiority which it was long known that France enjoyed over us respecting it. The late regulations threw away the restrictions imposed upon it, and established a free trade in silk with a protecting duty of 30 per cent. It was said, that we had been labouring, until the present day, under a complete ignorance of the mode in which this trade was conducted in foreign countries. We had been told, for some years past, that the abundance of our capital, and the excellence of our skill, would give us an advantage which, when the restrictions on the trade were removed, would be sufficient to ensure our superiority. The persons carrying on the trade in this country were as ignorant upon the point as the government itself appeared to be. They sent, however, a deputation of well-qualified individuals into foreign countries,

for the purpose of acquiring information into the extent and quality of the silk-trade in those countries; and those individuals found, to their surprise, that the silk-trade in this country had no superiority of capital—that our workmen were inferior to theirs in skill—that we were behind them in machinery—and that with an inferiority of skill, disadvantage of machinery, and no superiority of capital, it was not likely that we should drive their silk manufactures out of any market. He had heard the observations made in the House last night with regard to the capital employed in the silk trade, and from the inquiries he had since made, he was convinced that the capital employed in the town of Basle alone beat that employed in the town of Coventry out and out. That was a new feature in the case. It proved that we had all along been mistaken, and that we had acted upon representations which were incorrect and erroneous. The hon. member referred to an inquiry which had been made respecting the prices of silk manufacture at Zurich, and at other places in Switzerland, the result of which tended to confirm the fact he had before stated. It appeared upon the whole, that at Lyons those manufactures were 45 per cent lower than in England, and that in Switzerland the average difference in favour of that country was from 50 to 60 per cent on plain goods, and from 60 to 100 per cent on figured goods. It was, moreover, a fact perfectly familiar to all persons acquainted with these subjects, that the protecting duty of 30 per cent which it was proposed to put upon all imported silk manufactures, would in practice be reduced considerably below that amount. The goods brought in would be so undervalued and managed, that the nominal 30 per cent would not amount to more than 20 per cent upon the actual value of the goods. He had no hesitation, therefore, in saying, that with such a competition as he had stated, by the foreign manufactures, this protection would be wholly insufficient; and that it would be impossible for the manufactures of this country to carry on trade, or to afford employment to their workmen, under the manifest disadvantages which would then attach to them. What he had said upon this subject he stated from the information of very sensible and honourable men, whose ability and veracity he knew to be such, that he implicitly believed the representations they had made to him. It was possible that some of the unimportant facts and details might have been exaggerated, or misrepresented, to those gentlemen; but, in the main, he was satisfied they would be found to be correct. This led him to the important topic of the Corn-laws, which was inseparably connected with this subject. It was to be found in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of every question in which the price of labour was concerned. Every body knew that the price of labour must depend on the price of subsistence. In the countries of which he had been speaking, the price of the ordinary necessaries of life was from a half to one-third less than in great Britain. He had asked a workman at Basle, what were the common wages given to good workmen, and he was told that 4*s*. per week was considered sufficient. There was, besides, another advantage which the foreign manufacturers had, which those of England could never hope to share in; namely, the easy and plentiful supply of the raw material. The manufacturers of Lyons were backed by the silk of Provence, and those of Switzerland by the silk of Italy. The foreign labourer, too, could live upon much less than was required by the English artisan. Not only bread was at a much lower price, but the labourer lived in a very different way. He had heard that the manufacturers of Lyons lodged and fed their workmen; and, upon inquiry of a man employed in a manufactory there, he learnt that the master crammed forty of his workmen into a long garret over his workshop, where they slept upon straw. This, he knew, was a state of things which English workmen would not endure; but it was another proof, in addition to the many which already existed on the same subject—so many indeed, that, in his opinion, they proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that it would be impossible for the English manufacturers ever to bring their goods down to such a price as would enable them to compete with the workmen of other nations. He did not believe his right hon. friend opposite was so great an advocate for all the dogmas of political economy, that he meant to set up the rigid doctrine, that if the trade could not support itself it ought to be destroyed; but he had expressed his belief, that a duty of 30 per cent would be enough to protect it against the competition of other nations; which was going quite far enough. After a trade had been fostered and

nursed up to this state—after it had been protected, for so many years, by a system of prohibition, would the House now consent to a measure which must have the effect of driving all the workmen connected with it to the poor-rates for subsistence? He was sure his right hon. friend would be as slow as any man to agree to such a proposition if it were made openly, and yet such must be the result of the present law if it were carried into execution. In the whole of his right hon. friend's speech he had never touched upon the question of the possibility of carrying on the trade. In the whole course of his declamation, he had said much about the freedom of trade, but he had avoided this particular point of the question, and had left the House quite in the dark as to the means by which the English manufacturers were to be enabled to enter into a competition with those of other countries. Now, the fact was, that the situation of this manufacture opened a very serious case as concerned the country at large, and all the other manufactures which it contained. For what, was now done with the silk, might be, and must be, done hereafter, with respect to the cotton and woollen manufactures. If things should remain in this state, the inevitable consequence must be, that the manufactures would leave us, and those which were most advantageous would lose the home-market which they enjoyed at present. The people of England were much too apt to look with indifference at subjects of this nature, and to believe, when distress and danger threatened any particular interest, that every thing would come right after a little time. This argued a very agreeable and cheerful disposition, and he had no inclination to check it; but the causes of the present depression in this particular trade were perfectly obvious, and the effects that had sprung from them could not be mistaken. It would not be prudent because we were now a wealthy and important nation, enjoying extensive trade, and filled with useful and important manufactures, to permit the introduction of a system which must undermine the most abundant sources of our wealth. If this should be begun, the government would one day find the country in a situation which they were now far from thinking of. It was well known that the seat of manufactures had several times changed. It had gone from the Mediterranean to Holland, and after having there been established for a long time, the manufactures were driven out of Holland by the tax upon bread. They had thence formed a station in England; and if the same causes were allowed to prevail, the same result must ensue; and they must go on to America, or some other country, in which they could be carried on with comfort and in prosperity. We were losing a little every now and then; and, if the progress of our loss was not quickly and satisfactorily arrested, we should be left in the most miserable of all possible conditions—that of a nation, from which the wealth it once possessed had departed. It was true that this country might exist, that it might even flourish, with one-half or one-third of the wealth it enjoyed at present. It had done so before, and was then as perfectly happy as a country could be. But, there was a great difference between a rising and a sinking state. He had no wish to draw on any question respecting the Corn-laws, especially that night. He was sensible that it involved a great difficulty; but, however great that might be, and whatever might be the consequences, the country must some day, and that no distant one, look at it with a serious eye. He knew that the abolition of those laws could not be effected without doing great injustice to some particular classes of the people; but, nevertheless, if it should become necessary, it must be done. The naval superiority which this country had so long maintained was another source of the prosperity of the manufacturing interests. The history of Europe, for the last two centuries, presented a constant alternation of peace and war; the peace seldom lasted so long as for ten years at a time. The power which had the command of the sea must, in such times, have the command also of all the markets which could be reached by her ships. She enjoyed also the opportunity of getting the raw material from all such countries as produced it, and from the very beginning of the contest the enemies' harbours were blocked up, so as to prevent any competition of supply by sea. Another fact which bore strongly upon the subject in this point of view was, that the conviction of this would cripple manufactures of a particular sort in France; for men would not enter very ardently into the establishment of them, when, after embarking the whole of their capitals, they might be thrown into utter

stagnation in the event of a war. This naval preponderance was of course lost to us when the war ceased; and although he should not, he was sure, be suspected of wishing to see the present state of tranquillity disturbed, he must remind the House, that every day of the continuance of peace helped to wear away the advantages which our manufactures had derived from this cause. The manufacture of silk in the south of France was, of all the continental manufactures, that one which was least exposed to the inconveniences of a war; because, from its lightness, it was capable of being much more easily transported, and the great consumption being upon the continent, it had not to encounter any of the danger attending the other articles of manufacture which were transported by sea. It had always been a most favourite manufacture in France, and had been carefully fostered by the government, at great expense, and by the exclusive enjoyment of uncommon privileges. It had thus obtained a vantage-ground, from which it could not be removed without great difficulty, and by the opposition of extraordinary power. The same might be said of any manufacture which had for a long time enjoyed any such exclusive advantages. In the manufacture of cotton and of iron we had the same pre-eminence (how long we might continue to enjoy them, he did not know); and the same difficulty, the same uphill work would be felt by any country who should attempt to rival us, as we must experience in attempting to compete with the silk manufactures of France. If, however, his right hon. friend was resolutely bent upon applying those free principles which had been so much praised, to the silk trade, he must give them entire and universal operation, or he would do great injustice. He must take that other step which he (Mr. Baring) had admitted was one full of difficulty, and could not refuse to the cries of the people whom this measure would throw out of bread, that without which they could not exist—he meant the freeing the corn trade from all restrictions. This would raise a question of such magnitude, that it would force the government to open their eyes to the real state of the manufacturing interests of the country. In the present state of the subject, he did not see upon what ground his right hon. friend could refuse to go into an inquiry as to the fact, whether the competition into which the manufacturers were to be forced would be so disadvantageous to them as they apprehended, and to enable the House to form a sound opinion whether they were or were not doing injustice to these people, who exclaimed loudly against the proposed measure. Here were hundreds of thousands of poor honest men, who knew nothing in the world of political economy, but who found on a sudden, that because some very wise men had of late sprung up, they were to be ousted of the earnings of their industrious and patient labours of many years. These people were at present, and had long been remarkable for being loyal, orderly, and well-conducted, and yet they found themselves on the very brink of the most painful distress, owing to the discoveries of the political economists. If this had been done at a time when other manufactures were flourishing, the silk-manufacturers might, perhaps, have had some relief. It might have been said, that they could go from one trade to another, and have found employment in the cotton-manufactories, but now the cotton-manufacturers were turning away their workmen rapidly, owing to the decline in that trade. It came, too, at this most unfortunate period, when the agitation respecting the paper currency and the general distress filled the whole country. At this period, if a mistake should be fallen into respecting the measure now under discussion (and he thought it very likely), the confusion and distress would be augmented to a most painful degree. It had been said by his right hon. friend, that the great cause of the inconvenience felt in the silk-trade had been occasioned by over-trading; but no proof had been offered in support of this assertion. On the contrary, the stock in hand was not greater than usual—a circumstance which could not exist if there had been over-trading any thing like that which had been imputed to them. He had no doubt that the immediate tendency of the law which was about to be carried into operation would be to deprive an immense number of these poor men of employment.—He was led now to remark upon a statement which his right hon. friend had made to the House on the preceding evening, respecting an advertisement issued by some silk-manufacturers of Macclesfield for 5,000 men. The hon. gentleman then read from a letter which he held, that, in the early part of 1825, a

great want of hands in the silk-trade was felt at Macclesfield; and that the workmen, taking advantage of this, struck in large bodies, so that the masters were obliged to comply with their demands. Even children, who were hired for two or three years, left their service, and went to other masters. In this state of things, a few throwsters met together, and entered into resolutions, one of which was, to advertise for 5,000 hands, in order to intimidate the refractory workmen as well as to supply such as were really wanted. At the same time, they entered into an agreement not to take each other's hired servants. These measures together had the effect of restoring tranquillity, and this was the true origin of that advertisement which had furnished his right hon. friend with so plausible an argument against the manufacturers. With respect to the other story of the French silk-manufacturer who had established himself here, and whose goods had been seized, he thought that if his right hon. friend had not relied so implicitly on what was told him at the Customs, but had seen the men, he would not have entertained exactly the same opinion as that which he had expressed.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, he had seen the men.

Mr. *Baring*.—Then, if his right hon. friend had seen the men, he wondered still more that he had expressed himself so decidedly on the subject. The case had been stated to him by persons of whose veracity he had not the slightest doubt, and from their relation it appeared, that they were silk-manufacturers in London, and that an informer came to them telling them that there was a large quantity of smuggled goods in a French house newly established. This man had been long employed as an informer for the Custom-house. They immediately sent to the Custom-house on the subject, and the answer which they received was, that the Frenchmen were privileged by the government, and that orders had been received at the Custom-house not to take cognizance of any information of this kind. Upon further inquiry, it turned out that this French house had made application to the government, and, representing that great benefit would result from their trying the experiment of introducing their own method of manufacturing silk, had obtained permission to transport their stock hither free from duty. The silk which they had brought in consisted of thrown and dyed silk, upon which the highest duties were payable. Now, he could not understand how this was to enable them to try the experiment they intended, because, as the only question was, whether silk could be manufactured in England as cheaply as in France, that could not be ascertained but by the manufacturer having the silk upon the same terms, in every respect, as the other persons engaged in the same trade. The circumstance, when it became known, excited, as indeed it was very likely to do, great dissatisfaction in the trade; and this feeling was increased by the French proprietors opening a shop in the city, where they sold the same goods which other persons dealt in at much lower prices. An information was lodged, that a large quantity of smuggled silk goods had been brought over, and some of them were, in consequence seized, in the firm belief that the goods so seized were really of French manufacture. In this belief the persons engaged in the seizure remained to this day, and he confessed that he had some doubts upon the subject himself ["hear, hear," from Mr. Huskisson]. It was at least not wonderful that persons should be deceived, as well because the materials and pattern were French, as because the marks of the machine and the width of the goods were such as would be made by French looms. It had been said, that the weavers who had been employed in the house, deposed upon oath that the goods were manufactured in England. That he did not believe. Thirty-seven pieces of silk were seized; nineteen of them were stated, by the proprietor of the French manufactory, to have been made in Spitalfields, and the rest at Manchester. Three English weavers made affidavits, but all the other depositions were made by French workmen. He desired to impress it upon the House, that there were reasonable grounds for suspicion. He would state what those grounds were. At the time M. de Pouillet was in this country, he was also carrying on manufactories both at Paris and Lyons; and if it should be the pleasure of the House to appoint a committee, he would bring forward a gentleman of character who would tell them that he saw M. de Pouillet in Paris, who had told him, that the smuggling of silks into England could, *in* spite of all restrictions, be effected with great ease, and that he had the protection of the

English government for smuggling various articles of French silk manufacture which were required in England. If they should finally, as he hoped most sincerely they would, appoint a committee to inquire into these matters, he had no doubt that the gentleman he alluded to, would be able to prove these things before them; at all events, he thought it necessary to explain what he knew of the circumstances of the case, for the purpose of showing that the transaction was not altogether so free from suspicion as the right hon. gentleman maintained, and that those who made the charge were justified, by appearances, in seeking for an inquiry. The explanation, too, was further necessary, to clear up the character of those individuals, who, he thought, had been rather unjustly assailed. The right hon. gentleman had said, that it was important they should not take any hasty step. It was, in his opinion, much more important that they should not take any wrong one. The right hon. gentleman had dwelt much upon the importance of their not abandoning the advantages which were to result from the reciprocities of free trade, and had asserted, that if they failed to persevere in that course, they would lose all their title to equal benefits from other nations. But, he would ask the right hon. gentleman what would be the consequences if, in pursuing that course in search of advantages from other nations, they were to fail, and lose all? He would ask him what would be the consequence if, instead of what the right hon. gentleman promised himself of the English manufacture contending successfully after the removal of prohibitions with the French manufacture, he should find, as he (Mr. Baring) maintained they would, that the French manufacturer preserved his superiority? What would become of his principles then? How was he to reconcile himself to the operations of a system which would drive to utter ruin and starvation the hundreds of thousands engaged in the silk-trade throughout the kingdom? The main question for their consideration, therefore, was, whether they were upon sound ground; and whether it would be consistent with good policy to pursue their system, without being thoroughly satisfied that they were so? If, on the contrary, there were dangers in their application of their principles, and some of those who approved of those principles entertained doubts as to the propriety of their immediate practical application, he thought they should pause before they determined, irrecoverably, to persevere in that course. The real question was, what were the chances of success, as compared with the dangers of failure? If they had not fixed that point with precision in their minds; if, as he conceived, they were as yet ignorant of many of the most important features of the case, he conceived that they ought to seek, by evidence before a committee, to put themselves in possession of information upon any matters of which they had the slightest doubt. He again implored them to consider the calamitous consequences which must fall on these poor people. If they were fully satisfied that their principles were right, and that the practice would be beneficial, in the name of God let them at once declare their determination, and set the question at rest. But, if they had the slightest doubt, the slightest hesitation as to the ultimate success of their measures, he beseeched them to pause, and consider the lamentable situation of the distressed manufacturers and artisans, who must, let their measures turn out wright or wrong, be sacrificed. The whole question, in his opinion hinged upon another which should have been the first in the attention of that House, although it appeared as if it was to be left to the last, he meant some settled principle on the subject of the Corn-laws. The price of corn should be regulated upon some permanent and immutable basis, before an attempt was made to produce such an extensive change in the trade or manufacture either of silk or any other staple of the country; and he could not but regret the state of uncertainty in which the right hon. gentleman had thought fit to keep both parliament and the country, with respect to his intentions on that all-important subject. When he was questioned last session, he had told them, that it was his thorough conviction that something should be done, and that, in the early part of the ensuing session, he should be prepared to bring forward some proposition on the subject. The noble earl at the head of his majesty's government had said precisely the same thing; and yet they were now told, that there was no immediate occasion for alteration. He thought there was nothing connected with our domestic policy, which required so much, or so speedy an alteration. At the present moment, all kinds of property, the interests of trade, of

manufactures, and of agriculture, were sacrificed to the uncertainty which prevailed as to the intentions of the legislature. No tenant could make an engagement with his landlord; no landlord could offer a lease to his tenant; no man could settle his affairs, or tell what he had it in his power to leave to his family, until the laws upon the subject of corn were regulated by some permanent standard. If the right hon. gentleman would say in right earnest, that it was his intention to do nothing, that would be intelligible; but as long as he continued to say that the question was in agitation, and that the present Corn-laws were not meant to be permanent, so long would all the property invested in commerce, agriculture, and manufacture, be placed in a state of fluctuation and uncertainty, which could not be justified upon any sound principle of policy, and which must, by its inconsistency, reflect discredit upon the conduct of the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues as men, and diminish most materially the respect which ought to be paid to them as ministers. He would conclude the observations which he had thought it his duty to offer to the House on this occasion, by reading a passage from a very interesting letter which had been addressed to the right hon. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and which he thought embodied, with great force, the sentiments which he had taken the liberty to impress upon the House. The extract, which was of some length, expressed the very strong possibility of the most experienced statesmen, and the ablest theorists, committing mistakes in the management of affairs, by attending too much to speculations formed in the closet, which might, after all, turn out impracticable; and recommended a close attention to the results of experience, as likely to correct the effects of a devoted attention to even the soundest theoretical principles.

Mr. *Huskisson* was quite aware, that he had no right to say one word, at present, except for the purpose of explanation, and in order to set himself right with the House on a point of some importance. With regard to what his hon. friend had stated respecting the French case, he thought it necessary to offer a few words in vindication, he might almost say, of his veracity. He now stated to his hon. friend, that he had never previously seen M. de Pouillet; that he knew nothing of him; and never had communicated with him in any manner whatever. He begged also plainly to state to his hon. friend, that whoever might have told him that he had not communicated with the persons who had brought forward the charge, had grossly deceived him. In the presence of his right hon. friends, the chancellor of the Exchequer, the vice-president of the Board of Trade, and the noble earl at the head of the government, he had stated to those parties what was the nature of the charge they had brought; and had expressed to them, he was afraid, with as much warmth as he had expressed last night, what he really thought of individuals who had ventured to bring forward such charges, and had failed to prove them. What he did then state, he had stated on the report of the Board of Customs, signed by four of its commissioners, setting forth the charge imputed, the evidence taken upon it, and what else had passed in the investigation of the matter. Now, he took the representations upon oath of these four highly respectable individuals against the insinuations of those who had been foiled in an attempt to cast imputations upon a very honourable foreigner; and who had aggravated the character of their original charge by the gross impropriety of their subsequent conduct.

Mr. *Davenport* hoped the House would not be deterred from doing what it might feel to be its duty, by any apprehension of liability to the charge of inconsistency. By adopting the measure of inquiry, hundreds of thousands of their fellow-creatures might be saved from ruin. He lived in the neighbourhood of those classes, and could vouch, without meaning to say any thing disrespectful as to the new measures that had been pursued by ministers in relation to the silk and other trades, that previously, the silk trade was going on progressively improving, and spreading itself into every county in that part of the kingdom. The fact was, that there were but two classes of persons that could be benefitted by these changes; namely, the foreign manufacturer and the smuggler on our coasts. At the former period to which he alluded, the silk-trade produced to government about 500,000*l.* a-year, and employed about half a million of hands. Let the House look at the different situation of that trade, and these individuals now, and judge of the severity of the change which the alteration in question had produced among them? He

had now, as he had ever done on those occasions upon which he had presented himself to the House, expressed his opinion with perfect candour. By so doing, he might expose himself to the sneers of the political economists; but he would venture to tell them, that people in his part of the country, who were connected with the trade, did not want mere theoretical men or opinions; they did not want all book-writing, but preferred practical experience. They well knew that what might be plausible enough in principle, might prove very objectionable in practice; and that what might grow vigorously enough in a book, might not flourish in a garden.

Mr. *Charles Grant* said, that whatever might be the opinions entertained by the hon. gentleman who had just concluded, relative to the measures proposed by his right hon. friend, or his sentiments with respect to the political economists, every body in that House must unite with him in a feeling of respect for the language that had been held by the hon. gentleman himself on this and on former nights. He agreed also with that hon. gentleman that they should approach with respect and sympathy the case of the individual persons who came before the House that night, because they came before it as petitioners, and still more because of the respectable and orderly conduct which those petitioners had always observed under circumstances of similar affliction. The respect also that he felt for the master manufacturers would lead him to treat those persons on this occasion, as well as on all others, with that respect and attention which they merited. The situation of the working classes, to which he had alluded, was such as demanded the sympathy of every man; and however convinced they who thought with him (Mr. Grant) might be, of the expediency of persevering in that course upon which the government had entered, and of opposing the proposition of the hon. member for Coventry, they would feel some degree of natural reluctance, in knowing that they must encounter the opposition of the feelings and prejudices of those who, with the best intentions, were nevertheless extremely misinformed and mistaken on these subjects. He had listened with a great deal of attention to the speech of the hon. member for Taunton, who had objected to the speech of his right hon. friend, because it had gone into a variety of extraneous matter. He did not understand the hon. member for Taunton to complain of that variety of matter, so much as to object to it because it was not quite united to the question before the House. But, if there had been no other reason to warrant his right hon. friend's enlarging upon such apparently extraneous topics, the speech that preceded his sufficiently justified him in doing so. For his part, he thought it a fortunate circumstance for the House and the country, that his right hon. friend had been so called upon, and that he had had the opportunity of making that speech, which he took leave to congratulate him upon, seeing that it brought conviction to every understanding, and proved, not only the soundness of the principles on which it was founded, but the certain grounds on which its success was inevitable. The hon. gentleman had said, that there lay upon his majesty's ministers the heavy imputation of inconsistency; but surely the hon. gentleman must have forgotten the speech of his right hon. friend (Mr. Huskisson). Without meaning to impute any thing improper to the hon. gentleman, he must say that that charge, and the charge of insensibility to the existing distress, had very naturally prompted his right hon. friend to make use of those expressions which, warm as they were, had added to the intense interest of his speech. It was singular, however, that the hon. gentleman himself had been guilty of the very error which he charged upon his right hon. friend, and without any thing like the same excuse. For a great part of his speech most certainly did not apply to the subject before them. What connection was there between his dissertation respecting the doctrines of Mr. Malthus, Mr. Ricardo, Mr. M'Culloch, and others, and the present subject of discussion? The hon. member had indulged frequently in sarcasms upon certain theories. He agreed with the hon. member in condemning the excess to which certain principles were carried, and he regretted that the hon. member, who so justly appreciated those principles, and which he wished to qualify, by rendering them practical, should enlist his weight, his authority, and his talent, under the banner which was raised by those who were so vastly his inferiors, and who gladly hailed the tried strength of the hon. member, as a powerful prop to their own imbecility. The hon. gentleman

complained that his right hon. friend had evaded the entire consideration of the question. Now, he was sure that the same complaint might be made against the hon. member; for in the course of his long and able speech, in which he had affirmed the most important interests of the country to be at issue, what alternative, what practical remedy, had he proposed? He would appeal to hon. gentlemen who heard him, and ask them if the hon. member had proposed a single remedy to mitigate the evil? In the course of his argument, he had omitted to state any alternative. The question before the House was not between competition and no competition, but between competition under the most unfavourable circumstances, and competition under the most favourable circumstances — whether competition should take place under the guarantee of government and under the protection of law, or fraudulently at the expense of honesty, and under circumstances which operated as a bounty to the smuggler and a tax to the consumer. Why, then, if the system of his right hon. friend was to be objected to, what alternative was proposed to the House? In 1820, the hon. member for Taunton had himself argued, that prohibitions must be abolished. Now, if his right hon. friend had carried the House with him to any conclusion at all, it was this, that prohibitions should never again be revived. The hon. and learned gentleman who had spoken on the preceding night, had indulged himself in rather violent invectives against the political economists, their projects and their theories. Now, of all the questions to which those invectives could have any application, the present one was least open to censure. It presented itself to the House in three views: first, as to the motives by which government had been guided in these measures; secondly, as to how far those measures could have produced the present depression of the silk-trade; and thirdly, how far the House might look to the future re-establishment of that trade under the measure so established by government? Now, in the first place, with respect to the motives of government, he assumed that this was that particular one which could least be objected to, as not being sufficiently practical in its nature. The state of the silk trade was represented to government as a practical grievance, and practical men were consulted for the purpose of devising a practical remedy. This has been triumphantly proved by his right hon. friend last night. The state of the silk-trade had been the subject of considerable discussion, and a committee of the House of Lords had summoned before them practical men, and examined them, for the purpose of ascertaining the mischief. There were at that time three practical evils affecting the trade. The first of these evils was the heavy duty on the raw material, and on the foreign thrown silk; the second evil was the Spitalfields act; and the third, the prohibition on the importation of manufactured silk goods. Now, it was proved before the committee in question, that the duty on the raw material and on the thrown silk aggravated those evils, by raising the price of the manufacture to an enormous height. It was proved that the duty on raw silk amounted to 30 or 35 per cent on the price of the material; and that the duty on the raw and the thrown silk, altogether, was equal to from 70 to 80 per cent on the price of the article to the consumer; while the drawback allowed was insufficient, and rather tended to increase the evils of this trade than otherwise. The first remedy recommended, was to get rid of this duty. The second grievance complained of was the Spitalfields act, and the first practical relief suggested was to get rid of it. The last grievance was the prohibition as to the importation. Now, what was done by the government in respect of all these evils? Did they confine themselves to any theoretical principles, or speculations, as had been urged against them? No. The duties on raw and thrown silk were reduced; the Spitalfields act was repealed; and two years ago the measure passed for putting an end to the prohibition. It was said that these measures had produced the present stagnation and depression of the silk-trade. He denied the assertion; because he found that that stagnation had extended itself to every other branch of industry; to branches of industry that had escaped the reforming lash of his right hon. friend; that it was not confined to the silk-trade, but operated upon those trades respecting which no legislative interference had yet taken place, as in the instance of cottons, timber, tallow, Irish provisions, and so on. It was therefore neither natural nor just to assign that as a certain and peculiar consequence to one trade, which was common to every branch of our industry and commerce. He

would, however, deny that the late measures of his majesty's ministers had contributed to the unfortunate state of the silk-trade. This was not a new appearance of that trade. There was no novelty in the phenomenon to attract our attention, for there was no branch of our manufactures so liable to fluctuation and misery as that of the silk-trade. He would candidly put it to the House whether, in their opinion, those laws that had heretofore regulated the silk-trade, had not something to do with the production of those alternations of success and misery. Could any man in that House look back without remembering the representations of extraordinary distress and stagnation which were on many occasions made in that House respecting the silk-trade? He lamented this as much as any man, and he now dwelt on it, because an effort was made out of doors to impress on the minds of the people a conviction that the present depression in the trade of Spitalfields was caused by the measures adopted by government. Nor was it in Spitalfields alone that this depression took place. It had prevailed in other parts of the country; and that at several other periods as much as at present. He well recollected that the melancholy case of the weavers at Coventry had several times been brought before the House, and especially in 1819, when the hon. member for Coventry had actually proposed to bring in a bill to regulate the wages of the ribbon-weavers, who were then receiving only 5*s*. per week wages each man, and two-thirds of the whole body of them receiving parish relief. That was a lamentable state of things, no doubt, and greatly to be regretted; but if such was the condition of these people at former periods, how could it, with any colour of reason, be charged on government, that their recent measures had alone caused the present stagnation and distress in the silk-trade? He had found some statements on the subject in Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, for the year 1793. By these statements it appeared, that in that year there had ceased working in Spitalfields, no less than 4,900 looms, which used to give employment to 18,000 persons, men, women, and children. It was lamentable to measure the comparative scale of misery at different periods; but he now made it because he thought it essential to the vindication of his majesty's government, and to repel the more than insinuation which had been thrown out, that all the present misery was to be ascribed to their measures, and as if no other causes had, at other times, produced similar effects in the same quarters. In the letter which had been addressed to his right hon. friend, and quoted by the hon. member for Taunton, he observed a strong confirmation that this assumption was most unjust. In the year 1796, a letter from the master and principal weavers was addressed to the directors of the East India company, describing a similar condition of their trade at that period. In the year 1801, the distress again became extreme, and, by way of relief, government had advanced the sum of 20,000*l*. In 1816 distress again prevailed, and at a meeting then held at the Mansion-house, it was all unanimously ascribed to the vast importations of silk goods by smugglers [hear, hear!]. Yes; during the existence of the distress of 1816 gentlemen attributed it wholly and solely to the importations of goods by smugglers. On that occasion, a benevolent gentleman, who had been very active on that occasion, had declared to the meeting, that out of 15,000 looms, which had been a short time before at work, 10,000 were then standing idle. He would state to the House the evidence of some practical men, manufacturers, who had been examined, in the year 1817, before a committee of that House. One gentleman, who was in a very large way of business, had stated, that he had been in the habit of paying to his men, for many years past, from four to five hundred pounds a-week, but that he was not then paying above five pounds a-week. He attributed the great depression in the trade at that time, in the first place, to the heavy duty on the raw material; and, in the second, to the extent to which smuggling was carried on. He (Mr. Grant) had adverted to former periods of distress, as afflicting as the present, in order to remove from the minds of hon. members the impression which was attempted to be made, that the present stagnation in that trade was to be ascribed to the recent measures enacted on the recommendation of his majesty's ministers. The distress at present was great enough, and seriously did he lament it; but it was not to be compared to the distress which was felt by the same class in 1816. Neither were the number of hands out of employ so great as had been represented. The population of Spitalfields was not, as was

generally supposed, entirely composed of weavers: it was the gathering place of the poorest classes of society, who, without any particular trade or occupation, were taken as weavers when there was a press of work; and, as soon as the demand for extra hands ceased, they were of course thrown out of employ, and consequently swelled the apparent list of unemployed weavers. He did not mean to deny from that, that there was no distress; far from it. He merely wished to show, that the distress that did exist, was unjustly ascribed to the measures of government. Distress did exist in the silk-trade, and to a very great extent; but its real cause might be found in that which had affected every branch of trade in the country; namely, the ruinous system of over-trading that had been pursued. The hon. member for Taunton had denied that there had been over-trading in the silk-trade. Now, he did not know by what test this question could be tried, except by the same as had been applied to the other branches of our trade; namely, the amount of goods imported. In the vast importations of all sorts of merchandize last year, that of raw silks was not the least. He held in his hand an account of the imports for the last four years, and it was as follows:—In the year ending the 5th of Jan. 1823, the quantity of raw silk imported was 2,177,000 lbs.; in the year ending 5th Jan. 1824, the quantity was 2,512,164 lbs.; in the year ending 5th Jan. 1825, it amounted to 3,135,600 lbs.; and in the year, or rather three-quarters, up to the 10th of October, 1825, it was 3,431,175 lbs. Thus, the three quarters of the last year were more than the whole of the importation of the preceding year. There was a proportionate increase in the import of thrown silk; but he would refer only to the two last years. The quantity of thrown silk imported in the year 1824, was, 342,000 lbs.; the quantity imported in the three quarters of the last year was, 800,000 lbs. Here was an increase of import beyond all precedent. It should be remembered, that prior to last year, thrown silk could not be imported into this country from any country except that in which it was produced; new silks could be brought from any country whatsoever. At that same time he was informed, that there was more raw silk in this country than could be worked for months. Then, when he was told by hon. members, that there was no over-trading, had he not a right to refer them to the real state of the fact? He was also told that, at the same time, unlimited orders were given from this country on Genoa for thrown silk. But another fact, which, besides the increase of imports, would prove that there was an over-trading in this article, was the increase in price. Raw silk at the end of 1824 was 19s. per lb.; it rose in 1825 to 28s. per lb., making in one year a rise of 9s. per lb. Thrown silk was in 1824 about 35s. per lb.; it rose in 1825 to 45s. per lb., making in one year a rise of 10s. per lb. Was he, then, to be told that there was no over-trading—no speculation? What could be a better proof of over-trading than this state of the imports and prices? He would refer, in proof of what he said on this part of the subject, to what was contained in a letter written by a respectable manufacturer to the marquis of Lansdown, on the subject of the silk-trade. After stating the rage for trading, &c. the writer said, "You will not be surprised, therefore, that the sale of 1825 took place under circumstances, the like of which were never before witnessed. Was it any wonder, then, that, under these circumstances, the manufacturing establishments already existing were enlarged, that new establishments were added, that masters and men were competing with each other in building houses, that thousands of cottages sprung up as if by magic, and were inhabited before the mortar was dry." Here was a description of the speculation in the silk-trade, and that by a manufacturer. Was not this a sufficient commentary on the manifesto that was sent out from Macclesfield, and published in Lancashire, requiring 5,000 additional hands for this trade? Was not this an adequate cause, by which might be fairly explained what had followed upon the heels of these speculations? But it was said, that there was an additional cause for this increased demand for more hands; and the hon. member had explained it by supposing that that requisition arose, not from any want of men, but in consequence of a difference between the manufacturers and the workmen, and of a combination. Admitting the circumstance to be as stated, he still looked on the extraordinary step which the masters took in advertising for 5,000 men, women, and children, as productive of injurious consequences, by encouraging high expectations on the part of the workmen. The first alarm in the silk-trade took its rise in the conduct of

the masters themselves, who, on the first agitation of the question, put forth in all parts their cries, that they could not compete with the French in this manufacture, if the prohibition were taken away. It was the manufacturers themselves who had created all the alarm, by retiring from the contest before they even tried the experiment. The new measure was to take place in July next, and the manufacturers struck, if he might say so, eight months before; and by so doing, had spread this alarm. He thought that the country had reason to complain of the manufacturers. If his majesty's ministers did not complain, certainly the consumers of silks, that was, the whole country, had a right to complain. They ought not to have constantly a cause of complaint in the high prices of silks. It was due to the consumers—it was due to the country—that this experiment should be tried. When his right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade, proposed to give up the drawback on silk, and a petition had been presented by an hon. member from several of the master manufacturers, stating that they were not satisfied with the proposed plan, the hon. member for Coventry declared in his place, that he was authorized, on the part of his constituents, to say that they were no parties to the sentiments contained in that petition, but that they were willing to take the drawback, and have the experiment fairly tried. But, had the experiment been tried? It was absurd to talk of a trial, as the time fixed on for making it had not yet arrived. Government had been induced to take from the operatives, at the persuasion and instigation of the master manufacturers, what they consider and value as their great charter—the Spitalfields act. Was it fair, then, that the masters, after having deprived the poor workmen of their protection, should now turn round upon the House, and insist upon theirs? On that account, he thought they had a right to complain. He should say to the master, "Adhere to the understanding which you then made with the House; try the experiment fairly; bring your goods into the market, and attempt a competition; and, if you then fail, you may come to the House with a strong case, at least one of justice, as well as one of feeling."—But the hon. member for Coventry desired to know what was the remedy to be proposed by government? Did they mean to leave things as they now were? Was nothing to be done? Now, he in his turn would ask the hon. member what was his remedy? —[hear, hear!]. Oh! but the hon. member proposed a committee! Why, was it right to leave these poor people, if they were, as represented, starving for want of employment—was it right to leave them to the slow aid of a committee, which would necessarily take a long time before it could come to a conclusion of its labours. For that committee would have to enter upon a wide range. It would have to inquire into the power, the wealth, the machinery, and the internal resources of all the states of Europe. It would have to calculate the rate of wages and the price of provisions, not only of Lyons, Zurich, &c. but all the silk manufacturing towns in Europe. But the question now was, whether it was likely that these measures would injure the silk-trade, and whether we could stand a competition with France? He was of opinion that we could stand such a competition; and that opinion was founded on the best grounds—the opinions and conduct of the manufacturers themselves. He appealed to the opinions of those men of experience who were examined before the Lords, committee in 1821. The practical men who were examined before that committee declared it to be their conviction, that with proper guards and precautionary measures, we could withstand a competition, if the heavy duties on the raw materials and the countervailing duties were repealed or modified. They all agreed, that a protecting duty of 15 per cent, would be sufficient against all competition; and we had now a protecting duty of 30 per cent. The hon. member for Coventry wished for persons to be examined, who were free from the excitement of that period. Now, he should be glad to know, whether the evidence of the persons proposed to be examined would not, at this moment, be influenced by excitement? When the hon. member for Taunton brought forward a petition against this measure in 1823, he had said, that when the storm came, the petitioners must escape from it as well as they could. How many of those petitioners, he would ask, had attempted to escape from the storm? Which individual of them had withdrawn his capital from the trade? Which had not increased his capital, multiplied his establishments, and exhausted every resource of art and wealth

to extend them? The hon. member for Coventry said that fresh information on this subject had been obtained from the continent. Had that information been procured before the panic began? He distrusted hypothetical calculations, especially connected with predictions. It was easy to employ calculations so as to bring a person to the very result he wished to arrive at. He could show by calculation, that instead of from 45 to 60 per cent, the difference between the cost of manufacture in France and England was only from 10 to 20 per cent. It was not difficult to show that those calculations went upon general assumptions. All of them assumed, that, with the exception of the article of silk, all things were to remain as at present. They assumed, that in this country there was the same waste in the manufacture of an ounce of silk as there was abroad in an ounce and a half. They assumed, that wages were always to be the same, whatever might be the demand for the article. They assumed, that although the demand might increase, yet that raw silk was always to maintain the same price. In fact, throughout all those calculations there was nothing but error and inaccuracy. Again, with respect to the dyes. They stated that France had an advantage over this country, with regard to the dyes, of about fifty per cent; whereas, it was, in fact, no more than seven per cent.—The hon. member for Coventry had complained of the heavy duties on dyeing articles, as an obstacle to the competition with the foreign merchant. He seemed not to be aware, that the duty on these goods had been reduced. In an able article on the state of the silk manufacture, in the last number of the Edinburgh Review, a list was given of dye articles, the duty of which might be advantageously reduced. But it was surprising that the author of that article should be ignorant that the duty had been already reduced on most of those articles. The duty on madder, which he stated at 12*s.* per cwt., had been reduced to 6*s.*; that on cochineal, stated at 2*s.* 6*d.* per lb., had been reduced to 1*s.* The same observation applied to all dye drugs, which, he believed, were higher in France than in this country; and he had the authority to state, that it was the intention of government to look into these articles, with a view of making further reductions. The duty on soap was severe; he was authorized to say that this article would also be looked into. The duty on barilla was already in a course of annual reduction. Another assumption in these calculations was, that the price of raw silk was lower in France than in this country. This assumption was unfounded. He had it from good authority, that the price of raw silk was not lower in France than here, and it was certain that the duty was higher; for in France the duty on the raw material was sixpence whereas in this country it was only three-pence. But in viewing the price of raw silk in this country, why was the large field opened by the introduction of Indian silk left out of calculation? Bengal silk to any amount might be imported to this country, and the quality was capable of being improved. Even within a few years that improvement was very visible. The committee of 1821 stated that, for some goods, it was equal to Italian; and that for tabbinets, the Bengal organzine was equal to any *foreign* thrown silk. It had been asserted that, in the sales of raw and wrought silks at the East India company's sales, equal weights of raw and manufactured silks could be purchased at the same sum of money. But the fact was, that in India the silk was of two kinds—country wound, and filature: the former was prepared by the natives, and used for the manufacture of Bandana handkerchiefs; the other was carefully prepared under the superintendance of the East India company, who, in 1770, had introduced into India the Italian mode of winding the silk off the coccoons. The latter cost 14*s.* per lb., the former 11*s.* The material was, therefore, not the same, nor was the price the same: one being a higher species of manufacture. That manufacturers and and practical persons should not be aware of this, was incredible, especially as it was stated in the company's sale books. The fact had been likewise so misstated in the able article in the Edinburgh Review,—a mistake he was surprised the writer had fallen into. The right hon. gentleman then adverted to the subject of the French hose. It had been said, that his right hon. friend had seen the French, but not the English parties. This his right hon. friend had contradicted, and he could confirm his statement. Neither of them had been aware of the charge of connivance on the part of government until his right hon. friend, the master of the Mint, communicated the report to the chancellor of

the Exchequer. Justly indignant at the charge, they instituted an investigation into the subject. Both parties were heard, and the result of the investigation, conducted before both parties, had been stated in a printed circular. The hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Baring) had, nevertheless averred that he could bring forward a person who would depose upon oath that the French manufacturer had offered to smuggle goods over to this country under the protection afforded to him by the British government. He thought it unfair that the reputation of a man of character and a foreigner should be impugned, upon the charge of an individual whose name was not mentioned. But the answer was short. The law was open, and persons enough were ready to act upon it. Why, then, did not those who talked of these frauds prove them, and bring the parties to punishment? He knew nothing personally of the French gentleman in question, but he spoke upon general and public grounds.—To return, however, to the point from which this accusation had diverted him—the comparative expense of the process of throwing silk in France and in this country. All hands were stating the expense of throwing silk in England at 7*s.* 6*d.* per pound. Now this was quite an unfair representation, for many manufacturers confessed they could throw it at 6*s.* per pound; and some even agreed that it could be done at 5*s.* The duty on thrown silk had formerly been 14*s.* 7*d.* per pound. Before the Lords' committee it had been distinctly stated, that one-third of that duty would be a sufficient protection to the English throwster; and the more the question was pressed, the lower this seemingly immoderate cost of throwing silk in England was reduced. Ten years ago, it had been stated at 12*s.*; then it came to 10*s.*, and 11*s.*; afterwards to 8*s.*; and now as low as 6*s.* and 5*s.* Now, as to France—It was said that, in France, the cost of throwing silk was 3*s.* 6*d.* a pound; but it so happened, that ministers had the assurance of an English throwster of the highest respectability, who had gone to Lyons to investigate the fact, that silk could not be thrown in France under 4*s.* For himself, he thought the protecting duty of 5*s.* ample, and that even a lower duty would be sufficient. It seemed to him, however, that the duty might be in some way regulated according to the quality of the silk. He could not see, what should make the cost of throwing silk in England so great as it actually was. It was an essential process towards preparing the raw silk for winding and weaving; but nine tenths of the work in it was performed by machinery. Let it be recollected, however, that the throwing was a distinct and separate branch of the trade. If we imported all our thrown silk from Italy, the weaver would have it at a lower price than that at which it could be manufactured here. Now, the throwing trade, which was only one separate branch of our silk-trade, might be destroyed, and yet the manufacture would continue; but, if the manufacture was destroyed in an attempt to support the throwster, then the trade, throwing and manufacturing, must come down altogether. Honourable gentlemen spoke of the state of our machinery in the silk-trade. Why should we not derive the same advantage from machinery in the silk-trade that we did in other trades? Why was it that we did not do so?—because our prohibitory system had prevented the average application of industry and intellect. The trade wanted that incitement, and was ruined for want of it; but that incitement the new measures would give. He admitted that the looms of Coventry were inferior to the French, and he was ashamed that he was compelled to admit it; but put them once into competition, and that inequality would speedily be at an end. One hon. member, he believed, had actually brought it forward as an argument, had seriously told the House, that the houses of Coventry were not capable of receiving the French looms. In that case, all he could say was, that they must be rebuilt, which would be a great blessing generally to the city. We had always complaints of incapacity, until capacity was put to the trial. He understood that already, in the mere prospect of the trade being thrown open, improvements in the silk machinery were carrying into execution. According to a letter received only yesterday from Manchester, an attempt to weave by steam had been made, and had succeeded. Two pair of gros de Naples looms, weaving each 108 yards of silk a week, were attended by a woman at 14*s.* a week wages; this was about 3*d.* a yard for the weaver's wages; and the cost of house-rent, with the interest of the value of the loom, might be taken at a farthing more: then the price at which this work was

done was $3\frac{1}{4}d.$, which could not be done in France under *7d.* What reason was there, then, that England should have any thing to fear? The hon. member for Coventry had also informed them, that the capital employed in the trade in Switzerland was greater than in this country; that the manufacturer there might walk over the mountains, take his goods to market, and return with the gold which he had obtained for them in his pocket, without any necessity for bills of exchange. He would not dispute the comparative amount of capital now employed; but could such a state of things continue, if the trade were open? With respect to the other observation, surely the hon. member did not mean to contend, that the manufacturers here could not compete with those of other countries, unless they were equally poor and ignorant. The superior capital of this country would be sure to be victorious, under circumstances equally advantageous. This was proved in other branches of manufacture, in which they were able to undersell all other nations, however higher wages might be here. The argument of the right hon. gentleman would exclude them from competition with Germany. The hon. member for Taunton had observed, that the manufacturers in Lyons and in the neighbourhood lived in a very poor way, and in wretched dwellings, which enabled them to sustain themselves upon much less wages than would suffice for the support of a working man in this country. Why, the same argument would apply to Ireland. But, were the population of that country, because they lived upon the most humble fare, resided in wretched hovels, and were miserably clad, able to compete with the producers of any article in England? To the prayer of the silk-manufacturers for further time, he was decidedly inclined to turn a deaf ear. Whatever time was proposed for any measure was always the wrong time; and when a respite had been granted two years ago, had it been applied by the traders to any thing like making preparation?* The very argument of the hon. and learned member for Lincoln settled the question. He said, that the prospect of the new measures had for six months past caused a stagnation in the market. Now, to extend such a state of things by making the prospect last still longer, could only do additional mischief. As it seemed to him, there was but one course for the House to pursue, which was, to persevere in the resolutions which it had adopted, and to come that night to a vote which should put an end to discussion upon the subject for ever. Let them do this; let them declare definitively that there was an end to prohibition, and they would soon find that there was an end to the alleged necessity for it. In a very short time, without the appointment of any committee, there would be an end to the apprehensions which traders were always sufficiently quick to entertain, for the safety of their own interests; and, in defiance of the threatened alarming influx of foreign goods, there would be a return of work in all those manufacturing districts which were now suffering under the pressure of distress.

Mr. *Dickenson* rose to support the motion. The right hon. gentleman who spoke last had, he said, observed that the manufacturers were to blame for the excessive speculations into which they had entered. It appeared to him, however, that it was not the manufacturers who were to blame, but that they had been led into these speculations by the measures of government. It was his opinion that the excellence of silk was an affair of colour, and that superior colours could be produced only in Lyons: from whatever cause it might arise, whether from some peculiarity in the atmosphere, or the water, he would not pretend to say. It was in vain to hope that we could enter into any commercial regulations with France that would place us on a footing of reciprocity. That country was almost exclusively agricultural. He wished to keep her merchants and manufacturers where they were, and was not disposed to make any sacrifices for their encouragement. He greatly feared that this country was borne away by a spirit of visionary speculation, which had led it, and would continue to lead it into much inconvenience. One year it was Mr. Owen's plan; another year there was no such thing as contagion; and the next, Mr. M'Culloch would persuade them that Ireland suffered nothing from the number of her absentees. In 1822 and 1823 the complaint was agricultural distress. Now, they were told of commercial and manufacturing distress, and the evils occasioned by the fluctuations of the currency. If they persevered in the commercial system they had entered upon, without first inquiring into all its bearings and probable results,

he was sure it would lead them into most serious mischiefs. Such being his conviction, he would support the present motion.

Mr. *Warre* said, he had listened attentively to all the arguments on both sides, and he could not say that his hon. friend, the member for Coventry, appeared to him to have made out sufficient ground for going into a committee. The real question before the House was, whether they were now, after all they had done, to renew the system of prohibition. His hon. friend who spoke last, appeared to have fallen into a material error in saying that French silks could not be admitted into this country at a duty of 30 per cent without certain ruin to the English manufacturer. The fact was, that French silks to any amount, did now easily find their way here; so that the manufacturer could not be worse off under the proposed change. He would appeal to any of the lords of the Admiralty, whether the most that could be effected by the blockade system, was not to keep out spirits; what were called dry goods, such as silks, it was impossible to keep out, with all the vigilance that could be exercised. He doubted the peculiar effect which the hon. member attributed to the water of Lyons. The slightest reference to history was sufficient to show that commercial improvement in all times had been opposed by those who thought their interests attacked by it, just as vehemently as the change now proposed was. He wished to refer them to a speech delivered some years ago by sir T. Egerton. It was upon an occasion when lord Newhaven came down and made a pathetic appeal to the House, respecting the miserable state in which Ireland was placed, and moved for a committee to inquire into the evils which she suffered, and the effectual way of removing them by granting her an import trade. Sir T. Egerton deprecated the measure, and said, that if the importation of cotton into Ireland were once permitted, there was an end to the prosperity of England, and that the people of Manchester in particular would be completely ruined. Lord North followed sir T. Egerton on the same side. Mr. Burke endeavoured to point out the folly of such an apprehension; but his efforts were vain, and the committee was refused. He heard with much surprise from his hon. friend, that France was almost exclusively an agricultural country. The impression on his mind was, that commerce and manufactures met with every encouragement there, and were flourishing to a considerable degree; but, from this circumstance, he entertained no apprehension. Why were not the principles of free trade opposed at the outset by those who, however erroneous in their opinions, thought they might prove injurious to British commerce? He sympathized as much as any man with the distresses of the silk-manufacturers, but he could not ascribe them to measures passed two years back. If postponing their operation to a more distant period appeared to him likely to produce any good, he should not hesitate to consent to it. Now, however, when ministers, by unforeseen circumstances, were placed in some little difficulty, he should feel ashamed of himself if he were to say or do any thing which could tend to impede the march of principles, which he felt perfectly convinced were for the public good. He had great doubts when the measure came into operation, whether France could pour in such an overwhelming quantity of silk as would injure the English manufacturer; and believing that the motion, if agreed to, would only do injury, he should oppose it.

Mr. *Peter Moore* said, he did not mean to introduce to the House any calculations on this occasion. It was his intention to argue the question on great national principles, having reference to popular rights and popular industry, without any calculations whatever. He would offer nothing to their consideration which he could not prove. Why did not ministers go to the proof? Why did they not permit the petitions to go to a committee? If a committee were granted, there was not a point on which his hon. colleague had touched, which he had not pledged himself to substantiate. If ministers would not meet the petitioners in that way, was it not an acknowledgment that they could not contend with the facts? He listened with attention to the long speech—(a speech that occupied two hours and ten minutes by the house clock)—which had been delivered by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Huskisson) last night; and he must say, that the right hon. gentleman had not touched on the misery and distress as he ought to have done, although he acknowledged that much misery and distress existed. This struck him so forcibly, that he was two or three times on the point of

interrupting the right hon. gentleman, for the purpose of elucidating what he had so much at heart; but he had desisted, because he knew it would have been a disorderly proceeding. He had, however, risen at the conclusion of the right hon. gentleman's speech, before the right hon. secretary got on his legs, to know what remedy was to be proposed to meet the present distress. The great body of silk-weavers were now before the House. The petitions from Coventry, Macclesfield, Congleton, Reading, &c., described the distress which prevailed, and he demanded a committee for the purpose of examining the statements of the petitioners, and of hitting on some alternative by which all parties might be satisfied. Much had been said about the London petition, signed, in the first place, by Samuel Thornton. He knew Samuel Thornton perfectly well, and he did not mean to throw the least imputation on him. He would only say, that the petition in question, which was presented by his hon. friend (Mr. Baring) in 1820 was a very good petition at that time; but now it was good for nothing. They were in a new situation; they had new remedies to apply, they had new things to look at, and they must conduct themselves accordingly. The question which he had to look at was, whether the city he represented, which heretofore was supported by the silk-trade, was to be consigned to ruin? The state of things in that neighbourhood was so deplorable, that the landed proprietors had declared, if they were not relieved from the burthen of the poor-rates, they must abandon their estates. Let not gentlemen opposite put on an appearance of smiling indifference. It was a question of great importance, not merely to Coventry but to the kingdom at large. The people must be employed —they must be preserved from sedition—they must be kept from irregular meetings —they must be protected from such a proceeding as took place at Manchester, and was known by the title of the massacre. If the proposition of his hon. friend for the appointment of a committee were defeated, he hoped it would be on the ground of the compliance of ministers either to suspend this measure, or to do it away altogether. They talked of the navigation act, and of other acts. Perish them all, but preserve the people! If he was in the place of ministers, he would say, perish your duties and your smuggling laws, but preserve the people, who were the great supporters of the church and state. Let them smuggle and maraud away as much as they could; as fast as you catch them, cannot you hang them all?

Mr. *Egerton* observed, that many petitions had been laid on the table from the towns of Macclesfield, Congleton, and other places in the county which he represented, to the contents of which he called the serious attention of the House. The distress was exceedingly great; and he implored ministers, before they threw out of employment so many thousands of poor persons, to examine their complaints. All he asked was, to allow the petitioners to go before a committee; and if they did not make out such a case as would justify government in abandoning their measures, he would no longer support their claim.

Mr. *Palmer* wished to say a few words in explanation of the grounds on which he meant to give his vote that evening. At a meeting which had recently taken place, he had stated to his hon. friend (Mr. Ellice), that he felt inclined to support his motion for a committee, and would do so, unless something cogent was advanced which should induce him to change his mind. He had, in consequence, come down to the House last night, and heard what his hon. friend had said in support of the motion. He was then of opinion, that the committee ought to be granted. But, he would ask of the House, whether a speech had not been subsequently delivered, which proved to demonstration, that he was wrong in the opinion he had thus hastily formed? He had heard the speech of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Huskisson), which had made a very great impression on his mind, and he regretted that his memory was not sufficiently capacious to retain every sentence of it. He would not weaken the effect of that speech by alluding to the important topics which it embraced. He could assure the hon. mover, that if the going into a committee would be likely to do even a trifling good to those deserving individuals whose case he had so ably advocated, he would cheerfully vote with him; but, feeling that this would not be the case—conceiving that, so far from doing good, it would effect much harm, by holding out fallacious hopes to those individuals, he must oppose the proposition. He hoped his hon. friend would believe that he acted from conscientious motives; and that, in giving this vote, he felt that he was consulting the best interests of the country.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* rose, amidst cries of "Question!" but was loudly cheered as he presented himself to the House. He proceeded nearly as follows:—Sir, after the direct appeal made to me by the hon. member for Coventry; after the appeal also made to me by another hon. member, I do feel it necessary, before the debate closes, to state to the House fairly, and as shortly as I can, the views and opinions which I entertain upon the present question. On the one hand, I am sure the House will believe that I cannot feel disposed to enter at large into a subject which has been already so fully discussed, and has, I may say, been disposed of so much to the satisfaction of this House and the country; to the satisfaction, at least, of those who had before approved of the principles on which his majesty's government have acted, and to the conviction of others, who, doubting the soundness of those principles, found their doubts set at rest by the powerful and unanswerable speech of my right hon. friend. As, I say, the House, on the one hand, will not suspect me of having the bad taste, after his luminous exposition, to intrude on their time, by discussing the whole of this vast subject;—on the other hand, it would feel that I did not do my duty by the House, by the country, or by my right hon. friend, if, leaving to him the whole weight of the debate, I omitted to claim for myself a full participation in the responsibility incurred by the introduction of those measures which he has so successfully explained and defended. It is for this purpose, then, that I now present myself to the House; and I do so because I have witnessed for the last six months—I might, perhaps, say, during a longer period, but principally for the last six months—the diligent, the systematic attacks made upon the plans and measures, as well as upon the public character, of my right hon. friend; attacks made, no doubt, with the cherished hope that they would prove injurious to his fame, and subversive of the sound commercial principles which he has so long and so anxiously exerted himself to introduce and establish. I agree with the hon. gentleman who has spoken to-night for the first time, and spoken in a manner which gives promise of the ability with which he will hereafter fill the station to which he has been called; I agree with him, that if there were any prospect that, by consenting to go into the Committee for which the hon. gentleman has moved, any thing could be done to soothe the feelings, or to relieve the distress, of those on whose behalf the committee has been required—or if it were merely a neutral measure—a measure in which parliament might innocently indulge the petitioners—or one calculated, perhaps, to give satisfaction to a few, though without benefit to any—I would even now forego my opposition to it. But it is because I feel that we shall practise a delusion upon the petitioners, at the expense of the interests of the country, if we were to hold out a hope, an expectation, of altering—nay, even if we were to utter a doubt of our determination to persevere in that course, which, after the most serious deliberation, parliament, in its wisdom, resolved to pursue.. What, I will ask, would be the effect of our going into the proposed committee? The question, let it be beaten out into as many shapes as you please, is simply this:—would a prohibition of foreign silks protect our trade as well as a moderate duty, such as that proposed by my right hon. friend? I will not fatigue the House by an unnecessary repetition of the arguments which have proved the negative of this proposition; but, to my mind, it is clear that a law of prohibition would fail as a measure of protection, while it would re-introduce in our system those vicious principles which we have found such difficulty in expelling from it. The evil which we have put down would re-appear, and, like a noisome weed, rapidly increase in growth, till it overspreads the whole soil of our commercial industry. But, Sir, this is not the point upon which I felt myself most immediately called upon to answer the appeal of hon. members—this is not the point upon which I feel called upon by my public duty to express my sentiments. It cannot be denied, Sir, that, under cover of the motion which the hon. gentleman opposite has thought proper to bring forward; and that he has brought it forward in the sincerity of his heart, and with the view solely to the relief of the sufferers whose cause he advocated, the House must feel convinced; but it cannot be denied, that, under cover of that motion, an opportunity has been taken, not by the hon. member, but by others, to attack the commercial regulations now in progress; measures more seriously deliberated upon, and introduced with the more universal consent of all those whose judgments were likely to be best

enlightened on such matters, than any other acts of our public policy within my recollection. The hon. gentleman who introduced the motion was of opinion, that it was advisable to adopt a sound and settled system of commercial policy. But the hon. and learned gentleman who seconded the motion (Mr. J. Williams), addressed you with a very different feeling, and in a very different spirit. That hon. and learned member, departing from those professional topics, in descanting upon which he had so often arrested the attention of the House, disported himself upon this, to him novel subject, certainly with all the confidence of a novice, but at the same time in a manner which evinced a total incapability of using his weapons, as he was wont to do in his more practised exhibitions. The hon. and learned member has not disdained to call to his aid, in the course of his address, all the vulgar topics of ribald invective with which my right hon. friend has been assailed elsewhere; and in the spirit of these attacks, has attributed to him feelings unknown to his heart, and sentiments utterly alien from his nature. And why, I ask, has my right hon. friend been subjected to these attacks? Because, Sir, with an industry and intelligence never exceeded, and rarely equalled, he has devoted his daily labour and his nightly toil to the improvement of the commercial system of his country. Sir, when this attack was made, the House felt, as one man, the injustice done to my right hon. friend, and if, in addition to the conscious rectitude of his own mind, and to the gratifying acknowledgment by this House, of his splendid exertions, he wished for another gratification, he had it in the universal feeling of indignation at the attempt so wantonly made to lower him and his measures in the public opinion. And then, forsooth, came the assertion, that nothing personal was meant. Nothing personal, Sir! Did we not hear mention made of hard-hearted metaphysics, and of the malignity of the devil? Nothing personal!—certainly nothing personal to the devil, who, by the way, and it is a curious coincidence, is, according to an old proverb, the patron saint of the city (Lincoln) which the hon. and learned gentleman represents [a laugh.] But could any one fail to understand, that the fiend-like malignity, the coldness of heart, the apathy of feeling, that all these abstract qualities, which the learned gentleman had described as distinguishing features of those who indulged in abstract speculations, were intended by the learned gentleman to be embodied in the person of my right hon. friend; qualities especially calculated to render a man contemptible in the performance of his public duties, and odious in the eyes of his fellow-citizens, for whose benefit those duties are discharged? These topics, Sir, are as vulgar as they are unjust. Why is it to be supposed that the application of philosophy—(for I will use that odious word)—why was it to be supposed, that to apply the refinement of philosophy to the affairs of common life, indicates obduracy of feeling or obtuseness of sensibility? We must deal with the affairs of men on abstract principles, modified, however, of course, according to times and circumstances. Is not the doctrine and the spirit which now animate those who persecute my right hon. friend, the same which, in former times, stirred up persecution against the best benefactors of mankind? Is it not the same doctrine and spirit which embittered the life of Turgot? Is it not a doctrine and a spirit such as this, which consigned Galileo to the dungeons of the Inquisition? Is it not a doctrine and a spirit such as these, which have, at all times, been at work to stay public advancement, and to roll back the tide of civilization? A doctrine and a spirit actuating little minds, who, incapable of reaching the heights from which alone extended views of human nature can be taken, console and revenge themselves by calumniating and misrepresenting those who have toiled to those heights, for the advantage of mankind [Cheers].

Sir, I have not to learn that there is a faction in the country [a cry of "No, no!" from the opposite benches]—I mean not a political faction, I should, perhaps, rather have said a sect, small in numbers and powerless in might, who think that all advances towards improvement are retrogradations towards Jacobinism. These persons seem to imagine that, under no possible circumstances, can an honest man endeavour to keep his country upon a line with the progress of political knowledge, and to adapt its course to the varying circumstances of the world. Such an attempt is branded as an indication of mischievous intentions, as evidence of a design to sap the foundations of the greatness of the country.

Sir, I consider it to be the duty of a British statesman, in internal as well as

external affairs, to hold a middle course between extremes; avoiding alike extravagancies of despotism, or the licentiousness of unbridled freedom—reconciling power with liberty: not adopting hasty or ill-advised experiments, or pursuing any airy and unsubstantial theories; but, not rejecting, nevertheless, the application of sound and wholesome knowledge to practical affairs, and pressing, with sobriety and caution, into the service of his country, any generous and liberal principles whose excess, indeed, may be dangerous, but whose foundation is in truth. This, Sir, in my mind, is the true conduct of a British statesman; but they who resist indiscriminately all improvement as innovation, may find themselves compelled at last to submit to innovations, although they are not improvements [Cheers, and cries of "hear, hear."]

My right hon. friend has been actuated by the spirit which I have endeavoured to describe. Convinced in his own mind of the justice and expediency of the measure which he has proposed for the improvement of our commercial system, he has persuaded the House to legislate in that sense; and, as the fruits of that legislation, I anticipate increasing prosperity and growing strength to the country.

Two objections have been stated to the course which his majesty's ministers are pursuing under the guidance of my right hon. friend: we are charged with having abandoned the principles of Mr. Pitt, and of having borrowed a leaf from the book of Whig policy. If the later accusation refers to the useful and honourable support which we have received on questions of commerce from some of those who are habitually our antagonists in politics, I have only to admit the fact, and to declare the satisfaction which I derive from it. God forbid, Sir, that I should withhold due praise from those who, forgetting political animosities and the vulgar divisions of party, have concurred with us in attempting to do public good.

But if it is meant to say that the commercial policy which we recommend to the country is founded on the principles of Whiggism, history proves that proposition to be untrue; I mean neither praise nor blame of Whig or Tory in adverting to matters which passed long before the political existence of the present generation; but, historically speaking, I must say, that freedom of commerce has, in former times, been the doctrine rather of Tories than of Whigs. If I look back, for instance, to the transactions between this country and France, the only commercial treaty which I can find, beside that which was signed by me and my right hon. friend, but the other day, since the peace of Utrecht, is the Convention of 1786. With respect to the treaty, the House need not be afraid that I am now going to discuss the principles of the treaty of Utrecht. But, by whom was the Convention of 1786 proposed and supported? —By Mr. Pitt. By whom was it opposed? —By Mr. Fox [hear, hear.] I will not go into the arguments which might be used on either side. I enter not into the question, who was right or wrong. I mention the circumstance only to show how easily facts are perverted for particular purposes of vituperation. It is an old adage, that when a man wishes to beat a dog, he has no difficulty in finding a stick; but the stick, in the present instance, has been unfortunately chosen.

Equally false are the grounds of the charge brought against us of having deviated from the principles of our great master. Sir, I deny that we have departed from the general principles of Mr. Pitt. It is true, indeed, that no man, who has observed the signs of the times, can have failed to discover in the arguments of our opponents, upon this occasion, a secret wish to renew the Bank restriction; and it is upon that point, and with respect to measures leading in our apprehension to that point, that we are accused, and not unjustly, in differing from those who accuse us. We are charged with a deviation from the principles of Mr. Pitt, because we declared our determination not to renew an expedient which, though it was forced upon Mr. Pitt by the particular circumstances of the times, is one that ought not to be dragged into a precedent. It never surely can be quoted as a spontaneous act of deliberate policy; and it was an act, be it remembered, of which Mr. Pitt did not live to witness those consequences which effectually deter his successors from the repetition of it. But it is singular to remark how ready some people are to admire in a great man, the exception, rather than the rule, of his conduct. Such perverse worship is like the idolatry of barbarous nations, who can see the noonday splendor of the sun without emotion; but who, when he is in eclipse, come forward with hymns and cymbals to adore him.

Thus, there are those who venerate Mr. Pitt less in the brightness of his meridian glory, than under his partial obscurations, and who gaze on him with the fondest admiration when he has accidentally ceased to shine. My admiration "on this side only of idolatry" of that great man, is called forth by the glorious course which he ran, and for the illumination which he shed over his country. But I do not think it the duty of a most zealous worshipper to adopt even the accidental faults of the illustrious model whom we vainly endeavour to imitate. I do not think it a part of fealty to him to adopt, without necessity, measures which necessity alone forced upon him. Treading, with unequal pace, in his steps, I do not think it our duty to select, by preference, those footmarks in which, for a moment, and from the slipperiness of the times, he may have trodden awry.

If, Sir, I have said enough to satisfy the House, that with my whole soul I adopt, with my whole strength I will endeavour to maintain, the measures of my right hon. friend, I have said enough; and I will not detain them by going into the details of a question, of which he is himself a perfect master, and of which he has made the House equally master with himself. But I should have been ashamed to let this debate go by without declaring that I will readily take my share of responsibility for his measure, leaving to my right hon. friend the full and undivided glory.

Lord *John Russell* said, that although the right hon. gentleman seemed, as well as many others who had preceded him, to take an erroneous view of the subject of debate, by entering into a defence of the commercial policy of the country generally, instead of confining himself to the particular question before the House, still he was willing to admit, that his majesty's ministers had not only pursued the rational line of policy, but were as much alive to the distresses of the country as any of those who heard him. He was sure that many of those who spoke most loudly, did not feel half as deeply for those distresses as his majesty's ministers. While he sympathised with the petitioners, and he did so most sincerely, he could not think that their situation would be bettered by acceding to the motion of his hon. friend. The alteration made by ministers in the commercial policy of the country had been the result of calm deliberation. It was received with scarcely any opposition, and with very little individual suffering; and although the present case might seem to be an exception to the rule, he could not avoid expressing his decided conviction, that no relief would be afforded by retracing our steps, or altering the course which we were now pursuing.

Mr. *Ellice*, amidst cries of "question!" proceeded to reply. He disclaimed the grounds on which some of its supporters had put his motion, and declared that he had not brought it forward with a view to the internal prohibition of foreign silk. He had no hope, after the statements made by the right hon. gentleman, that he should get the House to accede to his motion; but he thought it due to the petitioners, to take the sense of the House upon it, that the people might know their determination; for the sooner that question was put to rest, the better. He would not have asked for a committee, but that he hoped for some advantage to the petitioners, and he wished to obtain the opinion of the House, that the masters might from it be induced to take confidence, and put their men into employment. If the mere abstract principle of liberality was to be followed, it was not the silk-trade alone, but every branch of the manufactures of the country, that must be sacrificed. The woollen manufactures of Germany were fast approaching towards a successful rivalry with our own, and our colonies in North America were at that moment supplied with nails, not from Birmingham, but from the United States. The most active competition was employed against us in all the corners of the world; and the right hon. gentleman ought not to persevere in carrying on the application of his principles of free trade in manufactures, unless he was prepared to go further, and to annihilate that worst of all restrictions—a restriction in the trade of corn. He had heard with pleasure of the intention of ministers to reduce the duties on dyeing stuffs, and on soap; the latter of which was not only much used in the silk manufacture, but was positively a common necessary of life. The duty on that article was the worst duty paid to government, not only with respect to itself, but the mode of its collection. It cost more in collecting than any other, and was the most oppressive and vexatious, by the restrictions which were, in consequence, imposed on the manufacturer.

The House then divided; Ayes 40; Noes 222. Majority against the motion 182.

List of the Minority.

Attwood, M.	Howard, W.
Bankes, H.	Knatchbull, sir E.
Baring, A.	Lygon, col.
Birch, J.	Littleton, E.
Blackburne, J.	Moore, P.
Bright, H.	Pollen, sir J.
Buxton, T. F.	Robertson, A.
Byng, G.	Rickford, W.
Calcraft, J.	Rowley, sir W.
Calvert, C.	Smith, S.
Calvert, N.	Smith, Abel
Cholmeley, sir M.	Tomes, J.
Curteis, E. J.	Wells, J.
Davenport, D.	Webb, col.
Deerhurst, lord	Whitbread, S.
Dickinson, W.	Winnington, sir T.
Dundas, C.	Wrottesley, sir J.
Egerton, W.	Wood, alderman
Gordon, R.	
Guise, sir B. W.	TELLERS.
Gurney, R. H.	Ellice, E.
Heygate, ald.	Williams, J.

PROMISSORY NOTES, BILL.] On the order of the day for recommitting this bill,

Mr. *Calcraft* addressed the House on the subject of his intended motion, that the country banks should have the same privilege of issuing small notes until the 10th of October, as that granted to the Bank of England. He felt convinced that the arbitrary power given to the Bank of England would produce much mischief. In distant parts of the country there would exist a disinclination to take Bank of England notes; and unless government permitted the country banks to continue their issues of small notes, a stagnation in public trade and confidence must be the consequence. Under these circumstances, he trusted the right hon. gentleman would be convinced of the impropriety of running down the country banks. There could be no doubt that many of the stoppages which had lately occurred were to be attributed to the measures proposed by government. The country bankers wished as much as any other class, to get rid of the small-note circulation, and a metallic currency. He could assure the right hon. gentleman that his measure had contributed to revive the panic. He had seen a communication from an eminent banker in the north, which asserted this fact. The consequence was, that he, in common with others, had written up for a large remittance of specie.

Sir *J. Wrottesley* said, he would support any measure which would be of service to the country bankers. He was confident that the removal of their notes would be of great inconvenience to the country, and would agree to the amendment of his hon. friend. As the bill stood, what was to prevent the Bank of England from stamping a hundred million of these notes before the 10th of October, and put them in circulation?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the permission given to the Bank being to meet a specific contingency, there was no probability that they would issue more notes than were necessary to meet that contingency. The clause for the Bank to furnish accounts of their issues, and the notoriety to be given to the whole proceeding was, he thought, a security against an improper use of the power.

The House having gone into the committee,

Mr. *Hume* said, he felt completely at a loss to comprehend the state of the law as it existed with regard to the currency. He had read with much attention all the acts repealing the Bank restriction, and he freely confessed that he could not understand them. It appeared to him that it would be advisable to repeal all those acts, and to bring in a single bill, which should embody the whole law for the regulation of the currency. It would remove all doubts, save much time and trouble, and bring matters to a speedy and safe conclusion. Let the principle of the Jury bill be adopted in the present instance, and all previous acts be repealed which tended only to perplex and embarrass the law. If this suggestion of his were adopted, the House would stop short in its present proceedings, and introduce such alterations in their measures as he was convinced would be found simple and useful.

On the clause being read, which directed that the Bank should make monthly returns to the treasury of the amount of its small notes in circulation,

Mr. *Maberly* said, it was important that the country should know not only the amount of the small notes but also the whole amount of all issues of the Bank, large and small, since the preceding month. It appeared, by the paper before the House, that in seven days the paper issues of the Bank had increased by 6,000,000*l*. He did not say that increase was unnecessary; but he thought it was

important that the public should be informed of the amount of the issues. The Bank might issue a million per day if it pleased; but though circumstances might require such an issue, still it could not be denied that property would be affected by it. No doubt if the Bank issued too much, the over-issue would come back on itself; but that would not hinder the over-issue from causing a fluctuation in property, which would be injurious to the public. If their issues were regulated by proper motives, the Bank could not object to have the amount known; but if by improper motives, that would be a strong reason why the return should be made. He would therefore move, that to the words of the clause there be added these: "and also an account of the amount of all notes in circulation since the last day of the preceding month." At present, they would be obliged by this bill to send on or before the 15th of each month an account of all the one and two pound notes in circulation in the previous month, which were to be published in the Gazette within three days after; but he thought that the public should be informed of the whole of their issues.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* could not see any necessity why the Bank, as a matter of course, should be obliged to publish monthly accounts of all their issues. Of the amount of their small notes in circulation, it might be desirable that there should be a monthly return, in order that a check might be provided against over-issue. If circumstances required that the whole amount of the Bank paper in circulation should at any time be made public, there would be no objection to such a return.

Lord *Althorp* said, that the object was, to obviate the danger of a suddenly increased or diminished issue of notes of all kinds, and he could not imagine in what way the publication could be injurious to the Bank.

Mr. *Huskisson* observed, that the House might as well call for the publication of all the other proceedings of the Bank, as for the account now moved for. He, and all those who took the same view of this question had always contended, that the amount of the Bank notes in circulation was not a fair criterion of their being in excess, and the very fact alluded to was a proof of this; because if they saw the Bank circulation increased by 6,000,000*l.* in the course of a few days, and found by the arrival of every foreign post, that it made no difference in the exchanges, was it not a proof that there existed no necessary connexion between the circulation and the rate of those exchanges? He objected, therefore, to the amendment, because its adoption by the House would be giving countenance to a fallacy. The Bank were the best judges of the amount of their issues. If those issues were very great, and they found that the notes came on them, and that their treasure were sent abroad in large quantities, they would contract their issues; and thus the over-issue, if there had been one would be corrected.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that as there was a clause in the bill requiring the Bank to furnish an account of the amount of the small notes issued by them, it could not be contended, that it was foreign to the object of the bill to propose the amendment of that clause, by requiring an account of the amount of all the notes issued by the Bank. He was sure it would be found most beneficial, not merely to the Bank, but to the public, that such an account should be furnished, and it was a more delicate mode of proceeding towards the Bank, that it should be effected by a clause in the present bill, than by a separate enactment.

Mr. *Pearse* thought it might be convenient that the extent of accommodation which the public required as to small notes should be, from time to time, made known, though it might be of pernicious consequence that the whole amount of Bank issues should be published. Peculiar circumstances might occasionally make it prudent for the Bank to increase or contract their issues to a very great extent, and if the public were made acquainted with the mere fact of such increase or contraction without at the same time being told the particular reasons for it, a considerable degree of alarm would be created thereby.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* could not see how the amendment of the hon. gentleman could, with any propriety, form part of the bill before the committee, to the objects of which it appeared to bear no relation. At the same time, he entirely agreed with him, that it would be of great public advantage, that the Bank should, from period to period, make the amount of their issues known to the public. As to the increased amount of Bank notes issued within the last two months, he

considered that it gave no clue whatever to the amount in circulation, it being notorious, that they lay, for the most part, in the bankers' chests, who, being unable to form any sort of estimate of the demand likely to come on them, found themselves obliged to be prepared for any possible emergency.

Mr. *Hume* thought it would answer little purpose to have an account of the small notes issued, unless we had an account of the large notes also. Neither in France, America, nor in any other country, was there any secresy or mystery of this kind.

Mr. *Maberly* said, the very opposition of the Bank and government to this amendment would induce him to press it. As the Bank made large profits by the monopoly, they were bound to give every information to the public by which those profits might be ascertained. What had been observed by an hon. member as to a quantity of Bank-notes being locked up in the coffers of the bankers, afforded no argument against the motion; because those notes might, at any moment, be brought out, and gold demanded for them. The Bank had, on several occasions, acted with great impolicy; for when the exchanges were against them, they had not contracted their issues. Now, if their issues were published, the country would be aware of such imprudence on the part of the Bank. It was not necessary that the exchanges should be greatly against us to cause the Bank to be drained of its gold. One half per cent would be sufficient to effect this; and the House would be convinced of this when they reflected, that the insurance on gold to Paris was only a quarter per cent.

Alderman *Thompson* said, that although he had opposed this bill, he conceived that if it was to pass, it was better that it should pass without delay. As this bill gave the Bank the privilege of issuing small notes, it might be proper that they should furnish an account of the issues of such notes; but as the Bank derived no privilege from it as to its other issues, there was no reason why it should be required to furnish any account respecting them. The Bank might as well be called upon for an account of their discounts.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that it was his intention to propose that country bankers should also furnish an account of their issues. Such account would afford greater security against their failure than any other measure. If they were not required to do this, failures would occur as frequently from their issue of 5*l*. notes, as from their issue of 1*l*. and 2*l*. notes.

Mr. *Monck* said, that the amount of paper in circulation could not be accurately ascertained, unless the country bankers, as well as the Bank of England, were required to give an account of the amount of their issues. He hoped therefore that the hon. member would persevere in his intention.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* hoped the bill would be permitted to go through its present stage that evening; as there would be two more opportunities afforded for hon. gentlemen to propose amendments to it.

Mr. *Hume* said, it would be very improper that this bill should be hurried through the committee at that late hour. He would therefore move, that the chairman report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

The committee divided: for the motion 11; against it 66; majority 55.

Mr. *Hume* expressed his determination to continue dividing the committee as often as it was attempted to proceed. The chancellor of the Exchequer consented to the adjournment; and the chairman reported progress, and asked leave to sit again on Monday.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Monday, February 27.

SCOTCH BANKING SYSTEM.] Lord Melville presented a petition from Edinburgh, praying their lordships not to consent to any measure for altering the system of the currency in Scotland.

The Earl of *Roseberry* could not allow the petition to be read, without stating, not only that there had been not one dissentient voice at the numerous and respectable meeting when this petition was signed, but also that there had not been one dissentient voice at any meeting which had been held, and he believed there would not be a single dissentient voice at any of the meetings about to be held. There was in Scotland an unanimous, but not clamorous opposition to the proposed measure of extending to Scotland the bill for suppressing small notes. Men of all parties, who had never agreed on any one subject before, were united in this, and had stated, in the strongest way possible, that no project ever thought of was so

likely to derange, not merely the currency, but the whole transactions of the country.

Corn Laws.] Lord *King* said, he had several petitions to present against the landlords' act—the bread-taxing act—which in the petition, was described by the more common name of the Corn-laws. The first petition was from the ladies boot and shoemakers of London and Westminster. It generally happened with respect to all grievances which were petitioned against, that it required a quarter of a century, before parliament would listen to complaints, and set about correcting an evil. Such had been the case with the city job, the Bank Restriction act. That grievance had lasted a quarter of a century, and he was afraid this bread-taxing act, which had been in force since 1815, would last as long. The subject was allowed to be one which ought to be considered; but then it was very doubtful when the day of consideration would come. Last year it was said the subject would be taken up this year; and this year their lordships were told the consideration was to be taken up the next. But if the time of consideration was doubtful, it was still more doubtful how far the interest of those who gained by the law would not be suffered to prevail against the public interest. Perhaps his majesty's ministers might be divided on this, as they were on some other questions; and in that case, if ever they did come to a decision, the time of coming to it must be very doubtful indeed. On this subject the noble lord opposite and his friend acted a part of a nature something like what the dissenters described as "backsliding," or at least were resolved to be only "occasional conformists." In fact, he believed they were now busy looking out for the strongest side. In another place they had been compared to the devil of the metaphysicians; but they might, with more propriety, be compared to the ass of the metaphysicians placed between two bundles of hay, and so equally attracted by the flavour of each, that he did not know how to turn. He thought, however, that they most of all resembled the common ass, which always yielded to the heaviest blows. They were now well basted on one side by the landed interest, and unless the manufacturers and other parts of the population could thump them harder, he was afraid there would be little chance of any alteration of the Corn-laws.

The Earl of *Limerick* did not rise to oppose the petition from so distinguished a body, but to express his satisfaction at finding himself agreeing in opinion, for once, with the noble lord. He was glad to hear that a quarter of a century was likely to elapse before the Corn-laws were repealed; because he was persuaded that before that time expired, the petitioners themselves would alter their opinion on the subject.

The Earl of *Lauderdale*, when he heard from the reading of the title of the petition that it came from ladies' boot and shoemakers, he thought it must be against the *corns* which they inflicted on the fair sex, and from which the latter had much need of relief. That was a practice in which a reform would be very desirable.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Bank Charter Amendment Bill—Bank Advances on Goods.] The Marquis of *Lansdown* rose, before the order of the day was read, to say a few words on a subject of much importance, which he could not so conveniently introduce on the report of the committee on the Bank Charter bill being brought up, when he intended, pursuant to the notice he had given, to move a clause compelling banks or branches of the Bank of England to pay in coin at the places where their notes might be issued. His motive for rising at the present moment was, to ask the noble earl opposite a question, the answer to which might save trouble, by rendering unnecessary observations on the subject in the future discussion of the bill. What he wished to ask was, whether applications had been made by government to the directors of the Bank, with the view of inducing them to engage in a new plan or system—new at least in practice to them—by which money was proposed to be advanced on goods pawned or pledged to the Bank? If he did not receive a satisfactory answer to his question, he should take the opportunity of bringing under their lordships' consideration a new principle, which, if it corresponded with the representation given of it, he could not help thinking was most important and most alarming.

The Earl of *Liverpool* had no hesitation in answering the noble marquis, that a communication had taken place between some of the members of his majesty's

government, and some of the directors of the Bank, on the subject to which the noble marquis had alluded. But he was not then able to say what the decision of the Bank would be on the subject.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* expressed his regret, that any application of the kind had been made to the Bank of England to induce it to adopt so questionable a measure; and he earnestly hoped that the application would be re-considered by government; or, if the government were resolved not to re-consider it, that the directors would not lend themselves to any such measure. He was the more inclined to express this hope, because, without arguing whether it was proper to make application to the Bank to give relief, but assuming that such application was necessary, he was prepared, if the proposed plan were adopted, to contend that that mode of relief was by far the most objectionable which could be resorted to. It was a doctrine admitted on all sides, that the proper and salutary course for the Bank, was to leave that body, in its transactions with the public, in as free and unembarrassed a state as possible; because they would then be able to regulate their issues according to the rise or fall of the foreign exchanges. Now, with respect to the exchanges, nothing was more likely to tie up, and embarrass the Bank more than the measure which seemed now to be proposed; namely, that of making advances to a great extent on deposits of goods. At the time of the commercial distress in 1793, this subject had been forced on the consideration of the legislature; and both Mr. Pitt and the late lord Melville were decidedly against any proposition for advances on goods, which were then unsaleable. Both these statesmen had laid down, in the strongest terms, the principle, that it was not proper to induce the Bank to depart from the regular course on which its affairs had been conducted. He should quote their words. On its being suggested in the debate, that the management of the relief should be left to the Bank, Mr. Pitt observed, "that from the nature of the business, the Bank had declined interfering, because the species of the security to be given was not such as the Bank had been accustomed to receive. The measure now proposed was of a temporary nature. The practice of the Bank upon discount was permanent. The Bank took securities for what business they transacted in this way, at two months. The security to be given here was not determinable at that time, and the deposit was of a nature which the Bank had not been accustomed to act upon." What lord Melville said upon the subject was still stronger, and was particularly important, as his view of the cause of the distress of that period was similar to that attributed to the distress of the present time since he connected it with over-trading. On that occasion Mr. Secretary Dundas "begged leave to enter his protest against any declaration, that the present embarrassment of the merchants and manufacturers was the effect of the poverty of the country. He considered it as precisely the reverse, and would maintain, however odd it might sound, that it was occasioned by the uncommon prosperity of the nation—a prosperity which had induced some individuals to push their speculations beyond the extent of their own private capitals, but by no means beyond the capital of the nation. To call upnn the Bank of England to deviate from that line of conduct which it had proposed to itself, and under which it had flourished, he deemed by no means prudent. The Bank discounted upon certain securities; but discounted on the principle of having its returns in two months. The measure now proposed admitted of a more extended period for repayment, and was entirely different from what was the usage of that corporation." Now, if there were reasons then for not inducing the Bank to deviate from its usual practice of discounts, how much more did all those considerations on which that opinion was founded, apply now, when, by the common consent of all men who reflected on the subject, it was agreed that it was to the state of the exchanges that the Bank had to look for the regulation of their issues. He believed there was no man bold enough to deny this doctrine. But, if this attention to the state of the exchanges was at all times to be observed by the Bank, how much more would it be necessary now, if a deficient circulation was to be followed by a great and sudden supply. Nobody could tell what effect such a course might have on the exchanges, by which it was the particular duty of the Bank to regulate issues. Could it then be safe to induce the Bank to increase to a large extent their issues at a time like the present, on securities of a kind on which it had been not customary to make

advances? Issues on deposits of goods were far more objectionable than on stock, because the former were not so available. By extensive issues on goods for which returns could not be obtained, the Bank would unavoidably be greatly embarrassed. The action of the revolving machine would be clogged by these issues, and, taken together with the dead weight, the Bank would be found to have more unavailable resources, than, at such a time, ought to be locked up. In such a state of things, any diminution which the Bank might have to make in the currency on account of the state of the exchanges must be made in the ordinary discounts to persons in trade; and thus the whole burthen and mischief of the measure would be thrown on that part of the community which was most immediately affected by a decrease in the circulating medium. If any artificial interference with the trade of the country was really called for, he must say, that a direct issue of Exchequer-bills, in the manner in which that object was accomplished in 1793, would be preferable to the plan now proposed. Indeed, if that were true which was asserted —and if it was not true, the measures adopted could do no good — namely, that it was not money but confidence that was wanted by the merchants, nothing could answer the purpose better than Exchequer-bills; for those bills would serve to create the confidence which was wanted, and would create it without adding to the currency; whereas, by the intended course, every sum advanced would make an addition to the currency, and that in the most dangerous way, without reference to the state of the exchanges. The Bank, he supposed, must have already brought the currency up as far as the state of the exchanges authorized it to be carried. If that were the case, he would request their lordships to consider how great the risk must be of inviting the Bank to issue great additional sums, which could not fail to place the exchanges in an unfavourable state. If the Bank should be led into a mistake in this way, and make an increase of issues to the extent he had supposed, that improper increase would render it infinitely more difficult to get back to a wholesome state of currency. Then all the principles upon which their lordships' had been legislating, with respect to the circulation would be counteracted, and the difficulty of bringing back the country to a metallic standard would, by the unfavourable situation of the exchanges, be augmented in a most alarming degree. He felt it of great importance that the Bank of England should not, by any thing like a manœuvre, be induced to make an undue increase of issues, at a time when it was necessary that that body should be particularly on its guard. He considered it highly objectionable that the Bank should advance money on goods at all; and that it was equally for the interest of the Bank and the public that the plan should not be adopted.

The Earl of *Liverpool* regretted that he was not prepared fully to explain all the circumstances of the transaction; but he was warranted in saying, that the noble marquis had been greatly misinformed on the subject, and that the whole of his observations were founded on a complete mistake. He entirely agreed with the noble marquis in all the principles he had laid down: they were, indeed, the same principles which he himself had repeatedly avowed in that place. He perfectly agreed with him, that if any proposition were to be made to the Bank which might tend to embarrass that establishment—which might prevent it from exercising a free discretion over its issues—that such proposition would be by no means consistent with good policy. He likewise agreed with him as to the difficulty of any measure which might be suggested; for there were serious objections to any interference with a view to commercial relief. Having stated this much on the general principles, he would proceed to the immediate subject to which the noble marquis had called the attention of their lordships. In the first place, as to the Bank, it now possessed the legal right of advancing money on goods. He would own that he himself, and several of his friends, who acted with him, were not aware of this state of the law. The Bank, however, had a legal right, under their charter, to make advances on deposits of goods. This right was regulated by by-laws, made by the directors, and it was governed by the same principle as the issues of money on discounts. The very same clause of the Bank charter which prohibited buying and selling, permitted discounts and advances on goods. But the by-laws regulated the mode of the advance, and the manner in which the goods were to be disposed of, if not redeemed. He thought it right thus to clear his way on the question of the legal right of the

Bank, either to issue money on discount of bills or on goods. Now, it certainly did not follow, that because the right existed, it should therefore be exercised; but if the circumstances of the country were such as to make special relief to the commercial part of the community indispensable, then he would say that it was through the Bank that it ought to be granted. This course was obviously preferable to that to which he had always so seriously objected; namely, to the converting the government into a Bank, and inducing the merchants not to look to themselves, or to the banks of the country for assistance, which they otherwise would naturally do. His view of the subject concurred with that of those who thought that nothing justified the interference of the government in mercantile embarrassments, unless the distress was occasioned by some great public calamity inflicted by the hand of God, or some political event of a very extraordinary nature. And here he wished the noble marquis to recollect, that the evils of 1793 were very different from those of which the country at present complained. That period was the commencement of a war of a very extraordinary nature, and so unforeseen, that the highly-gifted individual then at the head of his majesty's government declared, that there was then a prospect of a longer peace than the history of the country at any former time afforded. He must then say, that at present it was the Bank which ought to be looked to by the merchants, and not the government; since the distress had not been brought about by any political events whatever, or by any public calamity, by over-trading and other causes, respecting the nature of which there was a pretty general agreement of opinion. Upon these grounds, he must repeat, that if relief was to be granted, it was through the Bank it should come. Whether or not the Bank would grant it, was for the Bank to decide. He readily admitted that there was a degree of evil in the course proposed; but all the objections which could be made against advances by the Bank on goods, applied with tenfold greater force to any attempt to give relief by issues of Exchequer-bills. In the present state of the market it was perfectly visionary to talk of relief by an issue of Exchequer-bills. Unless the Bank were to cash them, there could be no relief. But the Bank could not render those bills available, like goods, on which it would be most imprudent to make advances for a longer period than on discounted bills—that was, a period of two or three months. There was, then, a material difference between advances on goods which must be paid within two or three months, and on Exchequer-bills, which might be out a year, or even several years. The Exchequer-bills of 1793 were not paid off within the year, and there was afterwards another issue of Exchequer-bills, which had not been wound up for twenty-two years from the date of the issues. If advances on deposited goods was a course likely to take from the Bank the control which that establishment ought always to have over its issues, he would consider it most objectionable; but it must be apparent that no advances could be made without the consent of the Bank. This plan, therefore, left the Bank in a tenfold degree more in possession of its resources than any other mode of relief which had been suggested.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* conceived, that the supposed advantages of the measure were all founded on the assumption, which he thought could not be correct, that the goods which were unsaleable now, would be saleable in two or three months. If, at the end of that term, no market was found for the goods, the Bank must renew the loan, or the relief would be of no avail. If it did not renew the loans from time to time until a revolution in the markets had taken place, the measure would have no advantages; and if a portion of the Bank capital were to be locked up in goods until that revolution was completed, would any man say, that while it was going on, the exchanges might not be in a state to compel the Bank to restrict its issues, and bring again on the country that calamity which their lordships were then endeavouring to remedy?

The Earl of *Liverpool* re-stated his opinion, that the same principle ought to apply to advances on goods as to discounts. Discounts were made for a limited time, and so would be the advances on deposits. This was the mode in which, according to the by-laws, the business would be conducted. With regard to discounts, a great mistake appeared to prevail. Many persons supposed that they were made on mere personal security, but in reality they were always made with a view to goods. He would ask his noble and learned friend on the woolsack whether, from the transactions

of his court, he was not aware that this was the case? The Bank credited individuals, but it was because those individuals were possessed of property. Discount was a more convenient mode than advances on goods; but objections which applied to the latter practice before the warehousing system was adopted, did not apply now. Since the bonding and warehousing system was brought to its present perfection, and merchandise was placed under the king's lock, the inconvenience of advances on deposits were, in a great degree, removed, and issues on goods might now stand on nearly the same footing as issues on the discount of bills. The money advanced, it might be presumed, would be but a portion of the value of the merchandise deposited, and thus the return of the loan made upon the goods could always be commanded. The noble marquis doubted whether an advance for two or three months would be of any use. In answer to this objection, he could say, that he had conversed with persons from different parts of the country, all of whom agreed that advances for the short period he had mentioned would be of the greatest advantage; because they considered that there was no want of money in the country, and that the cause of the distress was the money being locked up in consequence of that panic, the effects of which would, he trusted, soon cease to be felt.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* thought that the merchants of the country were entitled to look to the government for relief, though the noble earl opposite wished to throw all the responsibility of any thing which might be done in that way on the Bank. The noble earl had argued, that the distress of 1793 differed from the present, because it arose out of political events; but he could not admit the existence of that difference, for the present evils were also the consequence of political measures. He agreed with the noble earl in believing, that the wealth of the country was not impaired. Indeed he was of opinion, that if all the transactions of the late period of speculation were wound up and balanced, it would be found that the country was not a loser to the extent of 100,000*l.*; but the property had changed hands. The evil proceeded chiefly from the noble earl's speeches and measures. He had taught the country to believe that it was rotten to the foundation, and that the great cause of the mischief was the one and two pound notes When Mr. Pitt declared war in 1793, he was not a more active agent in bringing on commercial distress than the noble earl had been. He could not conceive how any person could expect to restore confidence by the means to which the noble earl now resorted. Measures more fatal could not be adopted than those which he had ventured on. Two or three months advances would afford no essential relief to the merchants. The only way to give relief was that open and manly way which was adopted in 1793, in 1811, and 1814. That was a way much better calculated to restore confidence than the course which the noble earl had chosen to adopt. He would therefore say, let them tread the path which had been trodden before, and confidence would be restored. It seemed, however, that now-a-days old and tried measures were not palatable; some novelty must be served up; some experiment must be made; any thing, rather than travel in the beaten path of experience. He protested his belief, that the noble earl had brought the country into such a state, that the open and direct course of affording relief by Exchequer-bills was the only expedient likely to restore confidence.

The report of the Bank Charter Amendment-bill was then brought up. Upon its being read, the earl of Liverpool moved the introduction of his clause respecting the discretionary power to be vested in the branch-banks.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* moved, that a proviso be added to the clause, compelling the Bank of England to pay its notes in coin in any part of the country in which they had been issued through the medium of its branch-banks. He moved this in consequence of the strong opinion he entertained that both with respect to branch-banks of the Bank of England, and the provincial banks throughout the country, it was most expedient that their paper should not only be convertible into coin, but so convertible with the least delay possible, which would not be the case if the holders of them could not obtain payment of them in the place in which they had been issued. Another ground upon which he had been induced to propose this proviso was, what had taken place in Ireland. After that arrangement had been made, in pursuance of which the Bank of Ireland

had established branch banks in different parts of the country, a number of their notes were presented at one of those branch houses for payment in coin; but the demand was refused, on the ground that they were only payable in Dublin. The party making the demand immediately resorted to legal proceedings, for the purpose of compelling the Bank to pay in coin where the notes had been issued; but after the suit had gone on for some time, the Bank put an end to the proceedings, after consulting their counsel, who very properly represented to them that, their notes being in the nature of a general contract, they ought to be paid wherever they had agents. Since then, however, the Bank of Ireland had made an alteration in their notes, by the introduction of the words "in Dublin;" in consequence of which, a party who took those notes in the country—no matter how remote the place—was now compelled to repair to Dublin, before he could obtain payment of them in coin. He had also been informed that some of the country banks in this country had so altered their notes as to make them payable in London, and no where else. Upon these grounds, therefore, he moved, that a proviso be introduced compelling the Bank, in the event of their resorting to the establishment of branch-banks, to pay their notes in gold in those parts of the country in which they shall have been issued. He could not conceive any inconvenience likely to accrue to the Bank from this measure. They might, perhaps, be put to some inconvenience from being compelled to pay all their notes, if so required, at any of the places where they had appointed agencies; but they could experience none, or at least none which they ought not to endure, from being obliged to pay them in each particular place in which they had been issued.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, he had great doubts as to the effect of this clause in the way in which it stood now; for it would impose upon the Bank the necessity of issuing notes of different forms, so as to show at what particular branch-banks they were payable respectively. Then, if a person presented a note for payment at a particular place, which had issued at another place, he would be told that it could not be paid there; and the consequence of this might be to excite alarm in that part of the country. The question, however, was one of great difficulty; for he certainly would not take upon himself to say that all the Bank of England notes ought to be payable at the Bank of England alone, because that would oblige the Bank always to keep a great store of cash by them to guard against the possibility of a run, and consequently it would put them to great inconvenience. To show how necessary it would be for the Bank in that case to be always prepared to meet a run, his lordship stated, that he had been informed that a man had been lately going about the country, and displaying the greatest industry in collecting country bank notes, and presenting them at the respective banks (for what purpose God only knew), in Exchange for Bank of England paper. At last, however, a stop had been put to his career, by refusing to give him Bank of England notes, and paying him only in gold.

The Earl of *Liverpool* agreed that this proviso was one of some difficulty; but still he thought it was founded on good principles. It would, he admitted, compel the Bank to adopt notes of different forms; but, so far from that being an objection, he thought it would be an advantage; for if, as had been said, the Bank of England notes were more liable to be forged than local notes, this measure, by confining the payment of the notes issued by the branch-banks to the particular places where they had been so issued, and thus rendering their circulation local, would operate as a check to that crime, and thus effect a benefit to the public. It would also throw an impediment in the way of any persons who, actuated by malice or any other feeling, might be anxious, like the man to whom the noble earl had alluded, to produce a run upon the Bank of England here, or upon any particular branch in the country. He therefore thought that the Bank ought to adopt particular forms of notes. Besides, it would be invidious towards the country banks, to compel them to pay their notes in specie, if the branch banks of the Bank of England were not equally obliged to do so. The measure would, moreover, afford an amazing check to over-issues of paper. Upon the whole, therefore, he approved of the proposition of the noble marquis.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* contended, that the absence of a compulsory provision for payment by the Bank of England of its notes in coin where they had been

issued, would not only be invidious towards the country banks, but would put it in the power of the branch-banks to extinguish them altogether if they chose; seeing that they might collect all the notes in circulation of any bank they pleased and pour them in upon it at once, while the other would have no power to retaliate upon the branch-bank.

The clause, with the proviso, was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, February 27.

Debtor and Creditor Arrangement Bill.] Sir *C. Cole* presented a petition from the creditors of the Swansea bank of Gibbon and Eaton, in favour of the bill before the House for promoting a better arrangement between Debtor and Creditor. The petition went to point out the serious inconvenience which occurred, as the law now stood, in vesting the property of merchants, bankers, and others engaged in trade, who might be involved in difficulties. It often happened, that when the majority of the creditors were disposed to invest the property in the hands of trustees for the benefit of the whole, one obstinate creditor, by holding out, and taking out a commission of bankruptcy, involved the property in legal proceedings to such an extent, that that property, which would, under a different system, pay a large dividend, was wholly absorbed in law expenses, and thus lost to the creditors. The petitioners, therefore, prayed, that the bill which allowed the majority of the creditors to enter into arrangements for the security of the property, might be binding on all; and that after such arrangement had been entered into, no creditor should be allowed to sue out a commission of bankruptcy. They gave an instance of the evil of which they complained, in the case of the Swansea Bank.

Mr. *Bright* said, that great evils had arisen from the difficulty complained of, which ended, in many instances, in a total loss of the property to all the creditors. The object of the bill which he had introduced, was to cause the agreement of the majority of the creditors to be binding on the others. Since the bill was introduced, he had received several communications, which showed the immense losses which had accrued from the want of such a measure. These losses fell with great severity on the middling classes of traders. He would bring on his bill to-morrow, and so convinced was he of its necessity, that he would not abandon it, until he had ascertained the opinion of the House to be against it.

Mr. Alderman *Wood* bore testimony to the general utility of the bill.

Mr. *Lockhart* thought that, to render the measure productive of the intended good, it should be carried much further. The mere prevention of an investment of the property of a trader from being considered an act of bankruptcy would not be sufficient; for it often happened that acts of bankruptcy were committed before such investment was made. Now, it would be necessary that the bill should extend to prevent those previous acts of bankruptcy from affecting the trust deed for the benefit of the creditors. The bill which had already passed, making the issuing of commissions of bankrupt null and void, unless such commissions were issued within six months, was not carried far enough; and unless some improvement on this point were made in the present bill, it would be inoperative.

Mr. *Bright* was afraid of the difficulties which would be opposed to the suggestion of the hon. member. At the same time, he would be disposed to adopt any practicable course to make the measure effectual.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Promissory Notes Bill.] On the order of the day for going into a committee on this bill,

Mr. *Hume* said, whatever difference of opinion might exist in the minds of hon. members as to the causes of the present distress, they were all agreed, at least, in a sincere desire to alleviate it as much as was in their power, and to prevent a recurrence of similar disasters. He was sorry to be obliged to differ from the introducers of the present bill as to the causes of the evil, and he could not but consider the present measure wholly uncalled for, and extremely mischievous in itself. He begged to remind hon. members, that if they supported this measure for England, they could not consistently oppose the extension of it both to Scotland and Ireland; for it was but right that the same system of currency should prevail through every part of the united kingdom. The supporters of this bill must also be guilty of a decided retracta-

tion from the principle so ably set forth in the report of the bullion-committee, that the best system of currency was a paper one, convertible at pleasure into gold. One of the arguments which he had heard urged in favour of this bill was, that the issuing of one and two pound notes was an interference with the prerogative of the Crown; but, if this were so, surely it was an equal interference with the prerogative of the Crown; to issue five or ten pound notes. If this argument were to have any weight at all, it must hold good to its full extent; and then it would tend to prevent the issue of all notes. Some other supporters of the bill had endeavoured to recommend its adoption, by describing, in pathetic terms, the lamentable situation in which the poor working classes of the community were placed, who happened to be holders of these one and two pound notes at the time of the stoppages of the country bankers who had issued them; but he believed the loss on these one and two pound notes had fallen much more heavily on petty tradesmen than on the working classes; though, be this as it might, how did the present bill prevent a recurrence of these evils? The holders of the five and ten pound notes would still be continually exposed to the risk of bank failures, and the loss of 5*l.* or 10*l.* might quite as much distress a petty tradesman as the loss of 1*l.* or 2*l.* would a labouring mechanic. He must protest against any bank-notes of any kind being driven from circulation, because they must be replaced by a much more expensive currency, which would have to be purchased by substantial capital, and must, consequently, withdraw so much of it from being applied in advancing the trade and manufactures of the country. It had been recommended in his Majesty's Speech, that the banking system should be placed on a sure basis; and indeed it was the duty of ministers to see that this should be effected. If any country bank should fail between the present period and 1829, in his opinion ministers ought to be held responsible to the community for any loss it might sustain by such failure, unless they required deposits to be lodged by the country bankers. It was a notorious fact, that many individuals who were possessed of scarcely any property, had been in the habit of issuing notes to an enormous extent. The workmen at the dock-yard at Plymouth had been paid to the amount of 700*l.* or 800*l.* a-week in the notes of a country bank which had recently suspended its payments; and he had been informed, that at present the greatest distress prevailed amongst the small shopkeepers in the neighbouring villages who had taken these notes in payment from the workmen. Bank notes might be suffered to remain in circulation without any evil consequences, if the issuers of them were required to lodge deposits; and there would be no great difficulty in effecting this. Commissioners might be appointed, and some office established at the Exchequer, or elsewhere, for receiving deposits of stock or Exchequer-bills from country bankers, equal to the amount of notes issued by them, of course accounting to such bankers for the interest which might accrue on their respective deposits. If any note should be presented for payment, and dishonoured, upon its being so certified by a magistrate, it should be competent for the commissioners of deposits to transfer a portion of stock sufficient to discharge the amount of the dishonoured note, to the holder of it. But this would be a case which would scarcely ever occur in practice; for the credit which the country banks would derive from its being generally known that they had lodged deposits equal to the amount of their notes in circulation, would be so great as altogether to prevent any runs upon them; and thus, without any risk, there would be realized a saving of from 23,000,000*l.* to 24,000,000*l.* of gold to the capital of the country.—Another provision which he wished to have introduced into the bill was, that all bank notes should be payable on demand at the place where they were issued; for it had been the practice with some bankers not to make their notes convertible into gold, except at some place from two to three hundred miles distant from the spot where they were originally issued. This must, of course, have been attended with very great inconvenience to parties who wished to have gold for them.—He should also wish to see a provision in the bill, that both the Bank of England and all other banks whatever, should be required, on the 15th of every month, to publish an account of the amount of their notes in circulation. He expected he should be told that his plan was a mere theory, which could never be reduced to practice; but he would remind the House, that during the last year there had been an in-

crease of 2,000,000*l.* in the paper circulation of Ireland, and still that country had not met with similar disasters in its banking establishments as had befallen England. Scotland had also escaped; indeed it was scarcely possible that any loss could arise from the chartered banks there. America also afforded an instance of the good effects of adopting the system of banking which he had proposed. In the province of New York there were thirty-five chartered banks, and no private bankers whatever. It was invariably required, that all the capital should be paid up, before they were allowed to issue a single note. They were also required to furnish an annual account of their issues, and indeed of all their transactions, to the government; and if there appeared the least suspicion as to the solvency of any of them, a commission was immediately appointed to examine into, and report on the matter. Such were the good effects of this system, that since the year 1816, only one failure had taken place amongst these chartered banks, and that had arisen from its being connected with a private bank in another province. In Massachusetts and New Hampshire there were both chartered and private banks. With the chartered banks the non-payment on demand ipso facto amounted to a forfeiture of their charters; and it certainly was worthy of remark, that whilst almost all the private banks had been obliged to suspend their payments on account of the great depression which took place during the war, every one of the chartered banks continued to pay in specie all the time; and whilst other paper circulation was depressed from 15 to 25 per cent, the paper issues of the chartered banks were not depressed a farthing.—The hon. member concluded by moving, "That it be an instruction to the committee on the Bill, to provide for requiring from Banks and Banking establishments, deposits (to be lodged in the Exchequer or other proper office), equal in amount to the amount of Promissory Notes payable on demand, issued by them respectively."

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he should be inclined, on principle, to object to the introduction of any amendments to the effect of those proposed by the hon. member into the present bill; for this bill was of a mere temporary nature, and it would be a very inconvenient, not to say a very clumsy, mode of proceeding, to introduce into it measures of a permanent nature, and of such very great moment in themselves, as those suggested by the hon. member. The House had already come to a decision, that these small notes, which the hon. member considered so innocent, and indeed so useful, had a most pernicious tendency; and, indeed, the present bill was founded on the principle, that it was desirable to effect their gradual extinction, whereas the provisions which the hon. member wished to have introduced into the bill proceeded quite on different grounds, and professed to prevent a recurrence of the late disasters, by quite a different mode from the one pursued by the present bill. He thought that after the House had given its almost unanimous assent to the principle on which the present bill was founded, it ought not, at this late stage of the business, to abandon it; which it must necessarily do if it should adopt the suggestions of the hon. member. Now, he owned that of all the powers which could be vested in the Treasury, this appeared to be one of the most objectionable. He did not wish to pry into the private concerns of every country banker. The power of doing so would be as intolerable as it would be inquisitorial. Though he might not be inclined to avail himself of it, he would not attempt to conceal from the House his opinion, that it would be dangerous to intrust government with the knowledge of the amount of property which every man had vested in a country bank. It was a power that the Treasury might use with partiality and injustice, and he should therefore be averse to see it vested in those who had the direction of it. It appeared to him that the hon. member had completely forgotten that there were two species of creditors to every country bank; namely, those who held their notes, and those who had deposited money with them. Now, the security which the hon. member wished to exact from the country banks would be much better for the first description of creditors than it would be for the latter. Indeed, the hon. member's plan would prevent the country banks from being any longer banks of deposits, and would thus destroy one of the chief advantages arising from the present banking system. This was a decided objection to the proposition which the hon. member had just laid before the House. The hon. member might think it easy to establish country banks on the plan which he had

proposed, but, for his part, he must confess that he had great doubts about it. If they might judge what the feelings of those who had vested their property in this manner would be on hearing of such a scheme, from what they had been when a somewhat similar scheme was proposed some years ago, they would find that these country banks, which were of considerable use when properly regulated, would not be established; or, at least, would not be established under such circumstances as the hon. member proposed. If they were at liberty to establish charter banks with a limited liability, he could understand the argument which might then be addressed to them: "We have given you extraordinary privileges, and we therefore require from you a compensation in return, and that compensation we demand in a deposit of capital." He thought, however, that, as in all other cases where no extraordinary or exclusive privileges were asked, the adoption of the course recommended by the hon. member would be an impolitic and inconvenient restriction on the fair employment of capital. The measure of gradually extinguishing the circulation of small notes appeared to him to be a more convenient and salutary mode of checking the proceedings of country bankers; and as the hon. member proposed his scheme as a substitute for that measure, he felt bound to oppose its being given as an instruction to the committee. He was sorry the hon. member had not proposed his scheme at an earlier period. If he had, the House would have been spared a long discussion completely lost. Thinking, as he did, that the proposed clauses were not of the slightest value; that they would materially cramp the powers which country banks ought to enjoy, if they were to be permitted to exist at all; and that they would be a miserable substitute for the measure which he himself had proposed, he should give them his decided opposition.

Mr. *Sykes* said, he was of opinion that government would have acted more wisely if it had let the subject rest, till the arrival of quieter times; though he thought they had amended this bill considerably by extending the time during which the Bank of England was to have the power of issuing small notes. The sooner these discussions were ended, the better it would be for the country; for the alarm which they occasioned was inconceivable. Whilst he was on his legs, he would mention the cruel effect of the misrepresentation of an observation which had recently fallen from the president of the Board of Trade. That right hon. gentleman had mentioned the names of two banks which had failed; and, by some involuntary error, it had gone forth in one of the public papers that one of the banks belonged to the town which he had the honour to represent. Now, he was well aware that nothing had fallen from the right hon. gentleman which could warrant the publication of such an idea; and he hoped he would rise in the course of the evening to set the matter right.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, he was anxious to address a few words to the House, in consequence of an observation of the chancellor of the Exchequer; namely, that it would be inconsistent in any hon. member, who had supported the former measure of the government, now to give his assent to the proposition of his hon. friend. He was one of those who had supported the government on that occasion, and he had seen nothing since to induce him to regret that vote. He was sorry that ministers had departed from the correct principle which they had carried so triumphantly through the House; and it was on account of the ministers that he lamented the departure, not on his own. He was one of the minority of twenty-four who went out on that question of principle; and, therefore, he could not see how he was open to the charge of inconsistency in now voting with his hon. friend. Unless something was done to strike at the root of the present banking system, the country would be exposed to the constant recurrence of those evils under which it now suffered, and which it was impossible to say how long might continue. He denied that there would be any interference with the employment of capital. The instruction would only impose a wholesome restraint on the manufactures of the coin of the country. Why, the Bank of England itself gave security for the amount of their issues. Why? Because it traded in the coin of the country. For the same reason we had a right to demand of country bankers a deposit of capital to a certain extent, as a guarantee to the public that they should not throw the community into such a disastrous state as it had lately been involved in The real cause of the present calamity might be traced to the

augmentation and contraction of its paper currency; not only of that proceeding from the Bank of England, but, of that proceeding from the country banks. Every body acquainted with the commercial history of England knew, that whenever there had been great distress, there had previously been a great augmentation followed on the sudden by an unnatural contraction of the currency. It was the currency of the country that determined the value of every species of property within it. Those who held the issues, held the property of the country in their hands; and it therefore became the duty of parliament to adopt some measures to control them in those issues, if it wished to guard the country from the recurrence of such distresses as those under which it was now suffering. So long as they allowed 800 country banks to trade in the currency without giving security for their issues, so long must they be exposed to disasters and dangers. The bankers whose property was vested in those establishments were, generally speaking, men of education and respectability; but though the individuals were good, the system on which they acted was most pernicious. On this point he might avail himself of the opinions of the late Mr. Ricardo, who had declared it to be his belief, that in the major part of the failures of country banks, the parties might be fairly charged with something worse than want of prudence; and had recommended as a remedy against future mischief, that they should be compelled to deposit with government security in proportion to their issues. This opinion was the more valuable, as it came from a person who was thought to have carried his notions on the subject of free trade too far, and who had, in consequence, been branded with the title of theorist and visionary. Mr. Ricardo, advocate as he was for free trade, deemed it necessary for the government to interfere with the dealings of the traders in paper-money, and to secure for the community a guarantee against loss; which could be effected in no other way than by these deposits. The right hon. gentleman had said, that he did not like this plan, because it would make the government acquainted with all the concerns of the private bankers. Why need it? Could not the securities be vested in the funds by means of commissioners? With respect to the deposit banks, his hon. friend did not intend to interfere with them, but only with those who usurped the prerogative of manufacturing money for the country. He was of opinion that the government had originally taken a right view of this question, but that they had not dared to act upon it, lest they should irritate the feelings of the country bankers, whom they knew to be a powerful body. He felt it to be quite impossible that such accute and intelligent men as the president of the Board of Trade, and several of his colleagues, should be ignorant of the evils which arose from the large issue of country notes. If some measure was not taken to check it, the next step that the House would be called upon to take, would be, to destroy the country banks altogether, a consummation which he, for one, should not be sorry to see effected. He could not see why the Bank of England should be the only bank in the country under the control of the government. The banking system of the country, generally speaking, was carried on without capital. He did not mean to assert that there were not many establishments with whom the case was quite the reverse; but the want of capital was much more generally the case. If the government had the courage to deal with the question, they would introduce a radical change in the system, and thereby prevent the recurrence of the existing evils.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, he should not have troubled the House at all upon this occasion, if he had not been called upon by the hon. member for Hull, to set right a misrepresentation, which had occasioned uneasiness to several of his constituents. In a former debate, having had occasion to notice an argument of the hon. member for Cricklade, who had opposed the bill for the regulation of the one and two pound notes, on the ground that they could not be suppressed without producing great injury to the agricultural interest, he had endeavoured to show, that even if that inconvenience should ensue from that bill, there were other and greater *inconveniences* likely to ensue from the want of it. In looking about for a proof of that assertion in a country unconnected almost with commerce, he had referred to what had occurred at Horsham, in Sussex, where, ten years ago, the bank, which was the only one in the place, had failed, and had involved the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood in the most severe distress. After that failure had oc-

curred, another bank was formed; and that bank, he was sorry to say, had stopped payment during the late crisis. The distress of the district was again renewed in an aggravated degree, and the pressure on the farmers had been more than usually heavy. By one of those accidents for which no member of parliament could be accountable, and over which he had no control, it did happen that, in one of the vehicles of public information, it was stated that in the town of Hull—where there were more banks than one, and banks, he believed, of the utmost solidity—this failure, and this consequent distress, had taken place. When that misrepresentation reached Hull, it appeared to many persons of great respectability there to be calculated to do great evil. The mayor had, in consequence, written to him upon the subject, and he had immediately written back to the mayor, rectifying the misrepresentation which had been committed. He had not read the debate in which the misrepresentation had been made; it had therefore not attracted his notice, or he should have taken an opportunity of rectifying it immediately. He hoped that whatever inconvenience might have ensued from the mis-statement had been corrected by the letter which he had addressed to the mayor of Hull, and that the occurrences of that evening would set the matter right in every other quarter.—He would now come to the question before the House. His right hon. friend had never said that there would be any inconsistency in supporting the proposal which was now before them, and in supporting the bill for putting an end to the circulation of the one and the two pound notes. Undoubtedly, the hon. member for Westminster would be guilty of no inconsistency in supporting them both; but, unfortunately for the hon. member's observation, the hon. member for Aberdeen had proposed his amendment not to render the one and two pound note bill more perfect, but as a substitute for it. [Mr. Hume, "No such thing."] So it appeared to him; for the hon. member had all along declared his wish to extend the time for the circulation of the one and two pound notes; contending, that if they were convertible into specie, there was no harm in that circulation. What he had said upon a former occasion had been strangely misrepresented by the hon. member. He had said, that the issuing of these small notes was an interference with the prerogative; but he had not attributed the same character to the circulation of a banker's capital. He had complained, that the putting into circulation that which was equivalent to a sovereign was an infringement on the functions of royalty, and had stated that such a currency could not exist together with a metallic standard. In so doing, he believed he had stated very clear and rational doctrine. He had never been guilty, he never could have been guilty, of such an absurdity as the hon. member for Aberdeen had put into his mouth; namely, that the paying away a bill for 10*l.* or 20*l.* was an interference with the prerogative. Why, without such bills, the commerce of the country could not be carried on. With respect to the proposition before the House, he intreated the House to look at it in its true colours. True it was, the country was in difficulties. A general want of confidence existed amongst all men, which rendered it impossible to carry on the common affairs, at the common fairs and markets of the countries, or to effect the interchange of the common necessaries of life; and at a period like this, the hon. member proposes that the country bankers should make a deposit to the amount of the value of their issues. The hon. member for Westminster said, he would not interfere with any establishments that were banks of deposit; but, no bank could go on without that branch of business; and if this resolution were carried into effect, the consequence must be, that all the deposits would be immediately withdrawn. It would, in fact, be telling the man who had sufficient confidence in a bank to deposit his money there, "Take care what security you have for the payment of your money: the holders of the notes in circulation are guaranteed by the capital of the bank, and your deposits will only come in when all the rest are paid." Only consider what the consequence of introducing such a system, and particularly of introducing it at this moment would be! He believed that if they could ascertain the amount of the notes which the country banks had in circulation, and also the amount of the sums deposited with them previously to the commencement of the late panic, it would be found that the deposits exceeded the notes in the proportion of five or six to one; and yet it was now gravely proposed to relieve the existing distress by telling the depositors that they were not to have as good secu-

rity for their money as the holders of the notes. It was not fit, he contended, to broach such principles at the present moment. If it were consistent with the permission which they had recently obtained from the Bank of England, to erect chartered banks, with a limited responsibility, the House would have a right—nay, more, it would be his duty—to impose upon them some obligation of this kind. But did the hon. member expect that any bank could be formed, in consequence of his resolution, in which the parties engaging with unlimited responsibility were liable to be called upon for securities such as the hon. member had mentioned? If the hon. member had such expectations, he would find them wofully disappointed, if ever it became necessary to see how far they could be realized. He should hail it as an improvement of the banking system, if the Bank of England would relax its charter still further than it had yet relaxed it; and if it would permit the establishment of other chartered banks besides itself, with limited responsibility. Such a relaxation would add greatly to the permanent advantage of the country, and would entitle the Bank to its deepest gratitude. He hoped to see the day when the Bank would concede to the public that part of its privileges; but, in the mean time, they must take things as they were, and legislate as well and as wisely as they could. To introduce such a regulation as was proposed by the hon. member for Aberdeen, into the banking system at present, would be a great hardship on those whose interests would be affected by it. It was his opinion, that if this instruction were given to the committee, it would greatly enhance the difficulties of the country; and such being his opinion, he felt it to be his bounden duty to give his opposition to the motion.

Mr. *Robertson*, from some details furnished by the late earl of Liverpool, argued, that taking a comparative estimate of the total of our currency and of the population of England and Wales in 1774, and the present population of all Great Britain and Ireland, and the additional amount of uniform currency now demanded for Scotland and Ireland, in which countries their own monies formerly circulated, we should want, in the present year 1826, a currency double what it was in 1774; that, whereas, in 1774, it was in all about 28,000,000*l*., we should now require a currency of 56,000,000*l*.; and that, taking Scotland and Ireland into the account, we stood in need of one of not less than 78,000,000*l*. sterling. In France, which had a third more of population than the whole united kingdom, they had a currency of about 85,000,000*l*. If the House considered the enormous price of provisions, and all the necessary articles of consumption in this country, they would allow that our population, although only two-thirds of the population of France, required as great a currency as was necessary for the French people. But, if the present bill passed, where was all this money to come from? It should be recollected, that for twenty-years past, the mines of America had been comparatively unworked, and that the produce of the precious metals had been proportionately deficient, and inadequate to supply the demands and wants of commerce. If the currency was restored to the condition in which it stood in 1793, it would be found to be infinitely enhanced by the wants of the country. It was necessary, in this respect, to look narrowly to the wants of the landed and manufacturing interests. As for the merchants, their own bills might, for a time, supply among them a deficiency of currency; but with the other two classes, the case was very different. He thought the establishment of branch-banks would be a measure productive of great benefit; and that the same might be said of joint-stock banks. He, however, decidedly objected to the principle of limited responsibility, which it had not been found necessary to act upon in Scotland, where the banking system was most efficient. He concluded by recommending that the country banks should be made to pay in gold, as much as possible, as the best means of forcing them to accumulate gold in their coffers. He deprecated the passing of this bill, until the House had investigated more closely into the causes which were alleged as an excuse for it.

Mr. *Leycester* said, he conceived this measure to be a mere temporary one, intended by the chancellor of the Exchequer as a stepping-stone to further improvement. He thought that the security of the country depended upon the facility and certainty with which the paper issues —of whatever description they might be —could be converted at the will of the holder into gold. Not to do this would be to give a loose rein to the wild enterprises of those who had already proved that

they were not to be trusted, and to suffer the poison to go forth without an antidote. If that convertibility should be put out of sight, the right principles which had been universally acknowledged would be eluded. He thought than an amendment should be introduced into the bill to guard against any possible violation of the convertibility of paper into gold; and he should look for the support of the right hon. gentleman opposite to that amendment, because they had already explicitly declared their recognition of that principle. He trusted that nothing would tempt the chancellor of the Exchequer to deviate from the course he had proposed; and that no opposition, either in that House or elsewhere, would induce him to relax in his firm adherence to measures, which, however they might be assailed by clamour, or the "civium ardor prava jubentium," were the real means of preserving the prosperity of the country.

Mr. *Monck* said, that the system of a paper currency subsisting at the same time with one of gold, was the most objectionable in principle, as well as in practice, that could be imagined. The tendency of the one was always to drive out the other, and to cause the most serious inconveniencies to the country, by keeping up a ruinous fluctuation of prices. Money, and not money's worth, was the basis of a well-regulated currency; and whenever this principle should be departed from, the consequences must be highly detrimental. Much had been said lately of the respectability of the country bankers. He did not mean to say that there were not some of those persons who, in every point of view, deserved all that had been said in their favour; but it was not less true that some who called themselves country bankers were little better than swindlers. There was, therefore, the greatest reason why a difference should be made between persons who were entitled to confidence, and those who had no other object than to defraud those who were so unfortunate as to trust them. It was obviously the first duty of the ministers of any country to maintain the safety of the country. In discharge of this duty, they ought to prevent the persons he had alluded to from taking the king's coin out of circulation, and afterwards that which was the next best thing, the Bank of England notes, and substitute for them nothing but their own worthless paper. Was such a practice to be tolerated? There was now an opportunity for putting a stop to it for ever, and that without interfering with the trade of the country. If ministers did not now step forward and avail themselves of it, they would incur a heavy responsibility, and would have themselves alone to blame for the disastrous consequences.

Mr. *Maberly* said, he thought his hon. friend had not applied his usual discrimination to this subject, and that the amendment which he had proposed would fail to do any possible good, while it might produce serious evil. The security which he proposed must be an incomplete one, because, although it would protect the holders of the notes, the persons depositing their money with the bankers would be left without any security whatever. He thought also, that as the amendment went, in effect, to produce a great alteration in the law of the land between debtor and creditor, he ought to propose it in a substantive shape, when it might be discussed upon its own merits. He trusted, therefore, that his hon. friend would withdraw his motion, and bring it forward at some future opportunity.

Mr. *Hume* said, he understood the right hon. gentleman to agree with him as to the principle, but objected that this was not the time for carrying the measure he had proposed. As, however, the right hon. gentleman had not said what time he thought would be a favourable one, the same objection might always be made. He was desirous to ascertain what was the feeling of the House upon it, and for this purpose should press his motion to a division.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, he had stated, on a former occasion, that although it was his intention to propose a measure with respect to chartered banks, he should wait until some steps had been taken towards the establishment of such banks.

The House divided: for the amendment 9; against it 120. Majority against it 111.

List of the Minority.

Baring, sir T.	Palmer, C. T.
Burdett, sir F.	Wood, ald.
Maberly, major.	Webb, col.
Monck, J. B.	TELLERS,
Lloyd, S.	Hume, J.
Knight, Rob.	Hobhouse, J. C.

The House having resolved itself into a committee,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* observed, that at the time of the last adjournment, the committee had been occupied in the discussion of a proposition of the hon. member for Abingdon, with respect to a regular publication of the issues of the Bank of England. He had stated then, that although he was not an enemy to publicity in the transactions of the Bank, he did not conceive that there were the same reasons for demanding a compulsory statement of all its issues, as there were for requiring an account of the circulation of small notes. The House, he admitted, might exercise its power in requiring the amount of issues for a particular purpose; but as a general rule, it was his opinion, that it would lead to serious inconveniencies. He had then stated his objections to the hon. member's motion, to be founded on these grounds; and he begged now to say, that his judgment remained unaltered. It would therefore be better that the subject should now be taken up at the point where it had been broken off.

The Chairman then read the clause enacting that the Bank of England should every month make a return of all the one and two pound notes in circulation since the preceding month, and the amendment moved by Mr. Maberly on Friday, "and also an account of the amount of all the notes in circulation since the last day of the preceding month." On the amendment being put,

Mr. *Maberly* expressed his surprise that the right hon. gentleman should oppose a proposition so little liable to objection. He need not remind the right hon. gentleman and the committee, how materially the whole transactions of the country were affected by the issues of the Bank of England, and there was nothing in his opinion so likely to prevent any ill consequences from their operation, as the knowledge of the full length to which their issues extended. The right hon. gentleman seemed to consider that knowledge of very little consequence; but in truth it was more material than gentlemen were fully aware of. Government denied that they interfered with the Bank of England; but without going to inquire whether they did or did not, he would say that in a case like the present, it was their duty, as ministers of the Crown, to interfere for the protection of the country. Without the publication he called for, they never could be secure against the fluctuations produced from the extensions and contractions of the issue of Bank notes. He would read to them an extract from the pamphlet of Mr. Tooke, whose opinions seemed to have formed the basis of a great many of the right hon. gentleman's measures. His words were these—"In the mean time there are two specific evils which are severely and extensively felt, and of which the remedy is so obvious and easy, as to admit of being immediately applied. One of the evils is that to which I have already alluded—viz. the secresy and mystery in which all the proceedings of the Bank of England are enveloped. While that secresy prevails, all investments of capital, all mercantile engagements, and all contracts of whatever kind, are exposed to an element of uncertainty, in addition to any other that can have been in contemplation, and plans, otherwise well combined, may be defeated by some great operation of the Bank upon the currency, which if it were known and exposed to public scrutiny and discussion, would either be quickly abandoned, or would admit of being appreciated and acted upon. It may, I believe, be set down as a rule, that the administration of all institutions, of which the functions or operations in any degree affect the public interest, ought to be constantly and strictly subjected to the supervision of the public. Such supervision is the only effectual safeguard against errors and abuses. Next to the administration of the state, there is no administration of any office so immediately and extensively affecting the interests of the community, as that which is intrusted to the persons invested with the privilege of issuing paper-money, and who, by the manner in which they exercise that privilege, have it in their power to produce great changes in the property and condition of every individual in the kingdom. No man, nor set of men, ought, in my opinion, to be intrusted with that privilege; but being so intrusted, their exercise of it ought to be subject to the constant control and correction of public opinion. Such publicity would enforce a steady and consistent adherence to some settled rule, the uniform operation of which the mercantile world might understand and be prepared for. There is no reason whatever why the accounts of the Bank of England should not be published with as much fulness of detail as is exhibited in the accounts published half-yearly by the Bank of France."

He did not mean that they should exactly take the Bank of France as a model, which published every thing, even to the amount of their loans, but he thought that they should know something of a circulation which had been known to alter six millions in seven days. He could not understand, what reasonable ground could be urged against the publicity he required; but, if the Bank did refuse, he conceived that government, as the guardians of the public interests, were bound to compel them. Did they consider the injury to the exchanges—the incessant fluctuation of prices—and the various evils which might be in a great measure corrected by the knowledge of the extent of the issues of the Bank of England .The power which that body possessed was a most dangerous power, and ought to be subjected to the check of public observation.

Mr. Herries said, it was not because the Bank felt reluctant to give this account that he opposed the amendment, but because it appeared to him extremely objectionable. In the first place, it had nothing to do with the measure now before the House. Nothing was proposed by that measure, but to regulate the issues of one and two pound notes. If the amendment should be introduced, there was no subject relating to the Bank of England that might not, with equal propriety, be engrafted upon it. There was another objection to it which he thought even stronger than this. The actual amount of notes in circulation was never any criterion either of the superabundance or deficiency of money; and he could conceive nothing more likely to produce confusion than the publication of such amount. It would, perhaps, gratify the curiosity of the hon. member; but it could produce no good effect. Suppose it should appear by the monthly account, that a large issue of Bank-notes had taken place, and at the same time, from some other cause wholly unconnected with that, a fall had happened in the rate of exchanges, the inference would undoubtedly be, that the one was the cause of the other, and the greatest alarm and inconvenience would immediately be experienced. There were many other objections; but he mentioned this alone as sufficient, in his opinion, to show the inexpediency of the amendment.

Mr. Calcraft supported the amendment, which he thought was calculated to be useful to the public, and could do no harm to the Bank. The bill contained a provision, that an account like that called for by the amendment should be furnished with respect to the one and two pound notes. If, then, the principle was recognized, and was acknowledged to be beneficial as to the smaller notes, how much greater would be the security to the public by having an account of that which formed the more important circulation of the Bank. There was, besides, an annual return made to the House of all the Bank issues, and he saw no reason why they should refuse to disclose, at the end of every month, that which they were compelled to make public at the end of every year.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, the hon. member seemed to assume that the House called, as of course, for the return from the Bank every year. The hon. member was mistaken. During the period of the Bank restriction, the House did call for such returns, and they were made; but that was under a clause in the Restriction act for that purpose, and when the act was repealed, the practice was at an end. He had always stated that when circumstances made it expedient to have such a return, the House ought to call for it. He adhered to that principle, and was content to be bound by it on all occasions, when the circumstances should be proved to exist. He, however, objected strenuously to compelling the Bank to make such an account, periodically, because it was an interference which could not be justified but by necessity, and which would tend to mislead much rather than to inform all who might inspect those accounts. His hon. friend had just put a case in which great inconvenience might arise. Suppose the converse of that case to happen, and a rise in the exchange to appear to be the result of the Bank issues, instead of the alarm which the other circumstances would occasion, a confidence as unfounded, and in the end much more mischievous, would immediately be created, and the distresses under which the country was now unhappily labouring would be renewed. But then the hon. member for Wareham said, that if the plan was good with regard to the one and two pound notes, it must also be good as to the greater circulation of the Bank. But, these two things were in themselves entirely different. The regulation was applied to the one and two pound notes, because the Bank was per-

mitted to issue those notes until October. In all other respects, the Bank of England was on the same footing as to the issue of notes as any other banking establishment in the country. For these reasons then—first, because for consistency's sake it would not be right to call upon the Bank to do that which no other similar institution was called upon to do; and secondly, because the publication might lead to serious inconveniences, he opposed the amendment.

Mr. *Grenfell* declared himself to be a friend to publicity, and said that if his hon. friend pressed the motion to a division, he would vote for it.

Mr. *Pearse* objected to the motion on the ground that it would, if carried into effect, create considerable public inconvenience. If parliament had called for such an account of the Bank issues, as was now asked for, during the continuance of the Bank restriction, there would have been some plea for doing so; but now that cash payments were resumed, the Bank stood in precisely the same situation as any other Banking establishment. He was decidedly of opinion that if a periodical account of all the Bank issues was published, it would give rise to all sorts of rash speculation, and particularly with respect to the exchanges.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the greatest advantages would result to the public from the monthly publication of the amount of the issues of the Bank of England and of all he country banks. There were eight hundred banks in the country, and each of these, as well as the Bank of England, should be obliged to make a monthly return to the Stamp Office of the amount of their issues. The names of the bankers need not be laid before the House; but the returns might be made, so that the information of the amount of circulation in the country might always be easily ascertainable.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* could not see how any of the inconveniences which the honourable Bank directors apprehended could arise from the Bank periodically making known the amount of their notes in circulation. All commercial transactions alternately resolving themselves into payment in Bank notes, the Bank issues must so materially affect the prices of every thing saleable, that it appeared of the greatest importance that this information should be given. It might be doubted, possibly, whether the House had the right of compelling the return; and he decidedly objected to such a clause being introduced into this bill, which was passing for a different object; but he thought the Bank would act wisely in giving the information periodically, to their own proprietors; and that so far from either encouraging speculation, or leading to inconvenience, the knowledge of how the thing really stood would prevent all those exaggerated and erroneous reports of the supposed proceedings of the Bank, which were calculated to produce these mischiefs.

Mr. *Calcraft* thought that there was much in this suggestion of the hon. gentleman, and that there would be no necessity for the amendment, if the Bank would undertake to publish in the Gazette monthly accounts of their notes issued. The conduct of the Bank amounted to restriction, in fact; for instead of paying their larger notes in sovereigns, they paid in one and two pound notes. What was this, but a restriction of cash payments. He wished the hon. director would state whether the Bank were disposed to consent to publish a periodical account of their issues.

Mr. *Monck* supported the amendment. If the measure now proposed had always been in force, the Bank Restriction act of 1797 would never have been passed.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* differed from the hon. member who spoke last, in the view which he took of the question. The most erroneous inferences might have been drawn from the accounts of the issues of the Bank about the period of 1797. The average amount of the Bank of England circulation for two or three years previous to 1797 was 11,000,000*l.*; but in January 1797, just before the restriction took place, their circulation was contracted to 8,000,000*l.* The publication of that fact, unaccompanied with any explanation, would have led to the most erroneous inferences. He felt it his duty to oppose the introduction of the amendment, being of opinion that parliament had a sufficient check upon the Bank in calling from time to time for accounts of their issues. The publication of a weekly account would answer no good purpose, and might induce false inferences.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* observed, that though false inferences might be deduced from authentic facts, inferences much more false and much more mischievous might be drawn from assumptions which

were totally erroneous. For example, the right hon. gentleman had instanced the year 1797, when the circulation of the Bank had been contracted from eleven millions to eight, no returns then coming before the public. Now, in 1796, Paine, whose object was, to bring the Bank into discredit, had in his "Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance," stated the Bank circulation at sixty millions, instead of the eleven, at which it really stood.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, he could not vote for the amendment, not because he did not wish for publicity, but because by so doing it would appear as if he recognized the principle, that the Bank directors were acting as trustees for the benefit of the public, instead of for the benefit of those who elected them to their offices. He was not aware of any inconvenience that might arise from the disclosure required; but, although he would be glad to see such a course adopted by the Bank, he was unwilling to introduce it as a clause into the present bill. He would recommend his hon. friend to withdraw it.

Mr. *Maberly* said, he considered the check which it was the object of his amendment to impose upon the directors, indispensably necessary. The Bank had departed from all the true principles of banking, as appeared from their own statements. When he spoke of the statements of the Bank, he did not allude to any public document, but to those detached portions of information, which, from time to time, escaped from gentlemen connected with the Bank. It was admitted that the Bank had contracted to pay 13,000,000*l.* on account of the dead weight. Would they have dared to do that, if they had been compelled to give a periodical account of their proceedings? The Bank had lent of its capital to the government, and that had occasioned an extensive issue of paper. The time would come when it would be necessary to contract their circulation, and then, if the exchanges should be against us, the prices of commodities would be reduced more than 10 per cent. One of the Bank directors had stated before the bullion committee, that the Bank acted as trustees for the public. Could he venture to say that now, when the Bank had engaged its capital to government, to the extent of 25,5[illegible]8,000*l.*? In every way the Bank had departed from the true principles of banking. Independently of their engagements with government, they had locked up a portion of their capital in mortgages. Political events might suddenly arise, which would render it necessary for the Bank to contract its issues. It was not impossible that Russia might march an army into Moldavia. A sudden contraction of circulation, and a consequent reduction of prices, would then take place. Ministers had assigned no reason for not agreeing to the amendment, except that the present was not the time for proposing it; but they had not stated why the time was not suitable.

Mr. *Pearse* said, that the proprietors of Bank stock, who were chiefly merchants of the highest character and talents, though naturally anxious to obtain a knowledge of the concerns of the establishment with which they were connected, were nevertheless so satisfied of the abuse which might be made in the commercial world of the information which the hon. member desired to have made public, that they had constantly resisted every endeavour which particular individuals had made to procure its production.

Mr. *Irving* said, it had been remarked, that it was difficult to ascertain at what particular period there were too many or too few Bank-notes in circulation. The correctness of that observation had been established by recent events. A few months back 20,000,000*l.* of Bank-notes, with the rest of the country notes, had been found sufficient for the country: but at the present moment not less than 30,000,000*l.* or more were sufficient. This was owing to the contraction of the paper of the country banks. He was satisfied it would be injurious to afford persons an opportunity of drawing inferences from the amount of Bank-notes in circulation, by the publication of periodical accounts. Great inconvenience would arise from disturbing the public mind on a subject of such importance. He did, however think that the Bank ought not to observe any mystery with respect to the general course of their transactions; nor could they be fairly charged with doing so. The connexion between the Government and the Bank had been made the subject of much reprobation; but his own opinion was, that the connexion should subsist. The existence of the connexion was very convenient for both parties. [a laugh]. The connexion was absolutely for the well-being of both, and

stood on the same footing as the connexion between a private individual and his banker. It was said, that the advances which the Bank made to Government were frequently too large; but how were the Bank to supply that portion of currency which was necessary for the convenience of the public, otherwise than by advances to Government? The discounting of bills and the purchase of bullion were not sufficient to supply an adequate circulation. He had no hesitation in stating it as his opinion, that the best mode of regulating the issues of the Bank was by the sale and purchase of Exchequer-bills. He knew no reason on earth why the Bank, when the premium on Exchequer-bills was high, say 60*s*., should not sell, and when they were below par purchase. It had been stated that the Bank had departed from the true principles of banking when they lent part of their capital on mortgage. In his opinion, the Bank had rendered the greatest service to the country by that proceeding. At the time it was adopted, the rate of interest in all the great commercial towns of the continent varied between 3 and 4 per cent, whilst in England the mortgagee was compelled to borrow, on the best of all possible securities, at the rate of 5 per cent. The sum which the Bank had advanced on mortgage was only 1,400,000*l*. It should, however, be recollected, that the Bank had funds of their own, with which the public had nothing to do. Those funds, it appeared from papers on the table of the House, amounted to between 3 and 4,000,000*l*. Under these circumstances, ought they to be denied the privilege of lending 1,400,000*l*. on mortgage?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* observed, that the question suggested by the hon. member for Abingdon did not require the committee to go into these details. The hon. member wished simply for the whole amount of the Bank issues; it was therefore unnecessary to go into details.

Sir *John Newport* said, that the public had a right to claim of the Bank the information required, and no possible danger could result from affording it.

Mr. *Manning* said, that if the return was made as required, it would tend rather to mislead than to inform the House; for the subject could not be understood without many details.

Mr. *Maberly* said, he would not press the amendment to a division.

The amendment was then negatived. On the succeeding clause being put,

Mr. *Hume* said, that as the House had not adopted a previous suggestion which he had made, he now meant to offer an amendment, which would enable the poor to obtain payment from country bankers of their one-pound notes. He held in his hand the act of 37 Geo. 3rd. one clause, of which enacted, that if any country banker should refuse to pay gold for his small notes, within three days of demand, it was in the power of any magistrate to distrain upon his property by summary process. The 37th Geo. 3rd, had fixed the period at three days, but a subsequent act, passed in the same session, had made it seven days, and thus it had continued throughout all the subsequent measures, until it was left out altogether. He reasonably believed that the omission had not been intentional. At present, a person holding a one-pound country bank-note was in a similar situation to a person holding any commercial promissory note, or other undertaking to pay. The holder of the one-pound note, in order to recover its value, must bring his action against the banker; which was attended with great expense, and occasioned a delay of six months. Under these circumstances, the poor had no means of recovering the value of any small note they might hold. What poor man could bring such an action against a banker? It was absolutely necessary to give the public some summary means of redress against country bankers who issued more paper than they could command specie to meet it. The substance of his clause was, that if any banker should refuse to pay in specie the value of his note longer than seven days, the magistrate might proceed by summary process.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the purport of this bill was to replace the currency in the state it was in prior to the Bank Restriction act, at which period no clause like this existed, nor was there any such compulsory mode of proceeding. He thought the proposal liable to serious objection, and that it would be almost impossible for country bankers to carry on business if it were adopted. It was no justification of the proposal to ground it upon antecedent measures. Creditors of a country banker holding promissory notes would by this means have a better hold upon him than other

creditors. He had never understood that, before the Bank Restriction act, any practical inconvenience had been felt for want of this summary power.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, the hon. gentleman's amendment was intirely at variance with the principle of the bill. The hon. gentleman wished the continuance of the issue of small notes, under such regulation as should protect the public from inconvenience; but the object of the bill was to put an end to them, and (if it could be compassed) by such gradual extinction as would allow of their being replaced by a better medium. If the hon. gentleman's clause were admitted, in the present temper of the country, no banker, in his senses, would issue another note.

Colonel *Johnson* said, unless the clause was adopted, the poorer classes would have no means of recovering payment for their notes but by an action at law, which was leaving them without any remedy.

Mr. *Monck* observed, that country bankers could not object to the proposed clause at the present time, when specie could be so much more easily obtained than when it was formerly in existence. How could a poor man compel the payment of his note in specie, when he was forced to bring an action? The clause had been continued in all the Bank Restriction acts, until the 3rd of his present majesty, when it was left out. It would be strange that the clause should be continued when there was no specie to pay, and expunged when there was. If they did not adopt this clause, they would allow gold to be put out of circulation, and trash of paper to be substituted in its place, without giving any remedy to recover its payment but by an action at law. Such a course was the reverse of returning to a metallic currency.

Mr. Alderman *Heygate* said, the hon. member charged the country bankers with putting gold out of circulation, and substituting trash of paper in its place. Now, in 1797, country bankers had no more to do with issuing notes than the rest of the king's subjects. The gold was sent out of the country by government to defray the expenses of the war, and one-pound notes were then issued at the recommendation of Mr. Pitt; and, in 1822, they were again allowed to be issued with the unanimous concurrence of the House. During all this period, so far were the country bankers from being abused, that they were lauded as of great benefit to the country. The issuing of one-pound notes was the least profitable part of a banker's business, while it was the most troublesome, inconvenient, and onerous; so much so, that nine-tenths of the country bankers would be happy that they were precluded from issuing them.

Mr. *Warre* observed, that the worthy alderman admitted, in using the words of the hon. member who preceded him, "that gold was put out of circulation, and trash of paper substituted for it," that there could not be a current circulation of the one-pound note and a sovereign. This was the plain English of the words; but indeed it was already pretty well known, from good authority, that they could not co-exist. When country bankers issued their one-pound notes, and these notes filled up the place of gold, what was it but issuing so much trash? But it was said, that country bankers derived no profit from these issues—that they would be better pleased to be precluded from issuing one-pound notes. This he was not very willing to believe. If they so expressed themselves, it must be a sort of nolo episcopari. That they were so inconvenient, onerous, burthensome, and what not, he could not believe. That they were profitable he had no doubt, and that in proportion to the amount of their circulation. He drew a distinction between the holder of a one-pound note and the holder of a promissory note. The claim of the holder of the currency was much stronger. He had no choice; he was obliged to have it whether he would or not; but the holder of a promissory note had a choice; he might refuse it if he pleased. The lower classes, particularly, had no choice left them but to take this trash; and, if they were obliged to take it, they had a right to have a more summary power for its recovery.

Sir *R. Wilson* was of opinion, that the clause proposed was in favour of country bankers, and one which they ought to support. The universal complaint was, that their notes were discredited. It must, then, be their wish to impart credit to them. If the clause was introduced, many persons would take their notes who would otherwise refuse them, and thence credit would be restored to this part of the circulation.

Mr. *Hume* would ask the right hon. the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who described the situation of the lower classes, with respect to these one-pound notes, in

such pathetic language the other night, if he would now give them no other remedy than an action, by which they could not recover their money for six months?

Lord *A. Hamilton* observed, that the bill itself was a compulsory measure to force the payment of gold instead of paper. It had been argued, on a former occasion, by the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the President of the Board of Trade, that, according to the state of the law, the bankers were bound to pay on demand; but was it not a mockery to oblige men to bring an action at law to compel them? The amendment, let it be remembered, was not proposed to extend beyond notes under *5l.* Unless some measure was adopted for this object, the chancellor of the Exchequer would depart from the very principle of his measure.

Mr. *Monck* said, that if this clause was not adopted, the holders of small notes would be in a worse situation than they were in 1797, and up to 1823; for, up to the 3rd of the present king, the clause now proposed had been law; so that if it were a hardship, it was one to which the country bankers were accustomed. If they were compelled to issue small notes, they might have some reason to complain; but now they must take the good and the bad together. When they knew that it was always in contemplation to return to a metallic currency, they had no reason to complain that they would now be compelled to pay in gold by a summary process?

Mr. *Abercromby* said, that when this question was brought under discussion last session, on the occasion of a petition being presented by the hon. member for Montrose, from a person in Bristol, complaining that he had been refused gold for notes, he then entertained the opinion, that a summary process would be most expedient on account of the deficiency of security to the holders of one-pound notes. But the circumstances of the country were now essentially different. When the question was then discussed, the country was inundated with country notes, many of which were now swept away. The principle upon which there was an extension of time in the original measure was to prevent the too rapid contraction of the issues. To guard against this danger he supported that measure. The clause of his hon. friend would, he thought, increase that rapidity, and therefore counteract the effect of a measure for which he had already voted.

Mr. *Home Drummond* said; he differed from the hon. and learned gentleman in considering the present proposition as tending to force the one-pound notes more rapidly out of circulation, by diminishing their credit. On the contrary, he was inclined to think that the certainty of obtaining the value of them in a summary manner would tend to maintain the public confidence in that species of circulation. In Scotland the process for recovering all small debts under eight pounds was extremely summary, and not very dissimilar from that provided by the clause in question, with regard to one-pound notes; and he believed that the facility with which debts could be recovered in Scotland, contributed to maintain the credit of bankers notes in that country. If, therefore, he was not to vote for the proposition of the hon. member, it could only be on the ground that he did not see why this advantage should be given in the case of one-pound notes (for such he considered it both to debtor and creditor) over every other species of small debt.

Mr. *Hume* said, he expected his proposition would be supported by every banker in the House; but he would not rely on the bankers alone; he should expect the support of the ministers themselves. The system in its present form, afforded no security. The bankers might again get out immense amounts of notes, and might again spend large sums for their own living, as too many had done, if there were not some check upon such a system. He was sorry to see the day arrived when Mr. Cobbett's prophecies were realised; when, in fact, they were threatened with his feast of the gridiron. The prophecies had been realized; for the ministers now, in reality, acknowledged that notes were not equal to gold; that they were admitted to be not convertible into gold; and that was the fact respecting them, if the amount in specie could be rufused by bankers, and not be recovered but by an action. He would enforce his proposition, if he divided alone; but he expected he should have the support of every solvent banker in the House [Cries of "Order."]

Mr. *R. Martin* considered the expression of the hon. member to be unwarrantable and indecent. To imply that there were insolvent bankers in the House was indecent.

The Chairman said, he felt it necessary to call the hon. member to order. His speech was more disorderly than that of the hon. member of whom he complained.

Mr. *Martin* said, that if he was disorderly, he begged pardon; but he would ask whether the hon. member was entitled to say, when there were bankers of great opulence and respectability sitting in the House, "I expect every solvent banker will vote with me." If that was not disorder, he did not know what disorder was. It followed that if those persons did not vote with the hon. member, they were to be published as insolvent. Such language was indecent.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* thought the House ought not to be involved in a discussion on this subject. The hon. member would perhaps be willing to admit that the use of the word "solvent" was not quite proper. He was sure he would say it to save the House from a squabble.

Mr. *Hume* explained. He had first said "every banker," and admitted that afterwards he had used the word "solvent," though without any individual application.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that this clause would imply an injurious degree of suspicion, and throw unnecessary discredit on the country banks. There was a good deal of difference in the situation in which they now stood from that in which they were in last year respecting this part of the currency. Then it was expected that the small notes were to continue for a considerable period; and if the system were to be continued, it might be advisable to consider the propriety of adopting some such remedy as the one now proposed, to remedy the evil now complained of. But what had the House resolved to do? Not that the small-note system should continue, but that it should altogether be put an end to in three years. The measure was to facilitate the return to cash payments, and to decrease the inconveniences that might result from the suddenness of the measure. It was at first imagined that inconvenience would result from suddenly contracting the issues of small country notes. He thought such would not be the case, but he had found that inconveniences would result from a sudden contraction of the currency, and therefore had they been obliged to remedy this evil by substituting, for an extended period, the Bank of England small notes. But, would not the effect of the clause now proposed be to undo what the House had done? By the alteration of their measure they had endeavoured to guard against the consequences of the sudden withdrawal of the country notes; but if they adopted this clause, the pride and the prudence of the country bankers would alike impel them to withdraw all their small notes from circulation, to avoid the pain that any one might inflict on them, by dragging them before a magistrate on account of some small note. He therefore opposed the clause.

Lord *Milton* was of opinion, that if the bill passed with the clause, the evil would be increased tenfold. He was sorry that ministers should have thought it necessary to introduce the measure at all. In his view, the measure was calculated to do nothing but mischief to the country; and if he had been present at its introduction, he would have voted against it. What did the bill do but create fresh alarm, when the only cure for the evil was to inspire confidence? The persons against whom it was directed were not those whose flimsy means had failed in the panic before Christmas, but those who, by weathering the storm, had given proof of their competence and security. He regretted that ministers had legislated at all upon the subject. If left to themselves, matters would in due time have found their level. As it was, he could not conceal his opinion from the House, that the end of the panic was not yet arrived. He believed, on the contrary, that the most serious period of the storm was yet to come; and felt convinced that what had been done by government would only aggravate the danger. As he was decidedly hostile to legislating at all, he thought that the fewer powers the bill passed with the better, and he should therefore resist the proposition of the hon. member for Aberdeen.

Lord *A. Hamilton* could understand very well how the noble lord could object to the clause, objecting as he did to the bill altogether; but he was at a loss to understand how those who had introduced the bill could object to a clause calculated to ensure its effect.

The committee divided: For the clause, 19; Against it 163. Majority 144.

List of the Minority.

Burdett, sir F.	Griffith, P. W.
Denman, T.	Hamilton, lord A
Evans, W.	Hobhouse, J. C.

Johnson, Col	Warre, J. A.
Knight, R.	Webb, col.
Leader, W.	White, S.
Leycester, R.	Wilson, sir R.
Maule, hon. W.	Wood, alderman.
Monck, J. B.	
Nugent, lord	TELLER.
Sykes, S.	Hume, Joseph.

Mr. *Hume* again rose. He said, that he held in his hand four or five Bank notes, such as those which were to form the circulating medium of the country, and carry the House to the accomplishment of its object. Now, he called the attention of the committee to the inconsistency of ministers, for the notes which he held in his hand were not, strictly speaking, convertible into gold upon demand, and the holder was left to his remedy by an action at law. It was true that a rich man might obtain justice in this way; but what was to become of the humble holder of a single pound note, about the necessity of relieving whom so much had been said? It appeared that ministers were about to leave the poor man without any remedy whatever. The country banks were all alike; their "promise to pay" was false. They would not pay their notes in the country unless compelled to do so. One of the notes he held in his hand was the issue of a Warwick bank for five pounds, and it ran thus—"I promise to pay at the banking-house of sir R. C. Glyn and Co., London, the sum of five pounds, for value received here." But the receiver of this note in the country, "for value received," could not convert it into specie, unless he hired an agent in London, or came to town himself; and, in the latter event, the expenses of the journey would absorb the whole of the money. Another note belonged to the Stratford-upon-Avon bank, and was so much worn as to be scarcely legible. He would state, in order to show how long these rags would last, that this note was dated 1818, so that it had been eight years in circulation—a proof how little the return of stamps issued yearly was likely to show the actual number of such notes in circulation. All these notes were payable in London only. As this was an extreme hardship, he proposed to enact that, in future, all promissory notes should be made payable at the places whence they were issued.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, that it was his intention to propose a clause to that effect. When an hon. member first stated, that country notes were made payable in London only, he was not aware that such a practice prevailed. Having found that such was the practice, he had determined at once to remedy the evil. But how to do so most effectually was the question. The plan which he proposed was, that country bankers should issue no notes under 20*l.* unless such as were made payable in gold at the place where they were issued, leaving it to the country bankers to consider whether they should also make them payable elsewhere.

Mr. *Calcraft* was satisfied the hon. member for Montrose had no doubt of the solvency of all those banks whose notes he had so ostentatiously displayed. The hon. gentleman had shown his confidence in the notes, by keeping them in his possession; and no doubt he entertained a sanguine hope that now they had anwered the purposes of his speech, they would not be refused payment.

Mr. *Benett* thought it would be advisable that the notes of country bankers should be made payable in the country and in London also.

Sir *J. Wrottesley* said, it would be a great hardship to compel country bankers to make their notes payable in two places, as in that case they would be obliged to provide double funds to meet the demands in each place.

Mr. *Huskisson* was not prepared to compel country bankers to pay their notes in London, but he felt it right that they should pay them where they were issued, leaving it at their option to make them payable elsewhere also.

Sir *W. Ridley* said, he had not been aware that there were such things as notes not payable at the place of issue. There were none such, he could take upon himself to state, current in the north.

Mr. *S. Rice* said, that the notes issued by the branches of the Bank of Ireland were all made payable only in Dublin.

Mr. *Attwood* said, that his majesty's ministers had throughout acted, with respect to this measure, in the greatest degree of ignorance of the actual state of the country, and the nature and operation of its currency. They had at one moment rejected a measure proposed to them, and in twenty-four hours after, and under precisely the same circumstances, they had come down and themselves proposed the adoption of that very measure. The right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs had told them, on the authority of another

great statesman, that if a pound note and a guinea were circulated together, the guinea would disappear. The right hon. President of the Board of Trade said, it was impossible that a pound note and a sovereign could circulate together; and yet the right hon. gentlemen introduced a measure which was to keep that pound note in circulation with a metallic currency! The right hon. gentlemen excused this course by saying, that circumstances had arisen pending the discussion which had not been anticipated; but there had arisen no circumstances but such as any practical man of business in the House could have told the right hon. gentleman must be inevitable from the course they were pursuing. The custom of drawing notes payable in London only had long been general in the midland counties, and particularly in Leicestershire.

Mr. *Mansfield* rose to set the hon. member for Callington right, upon the custom which he said was so general in the midland counties. The fact was, that in Leicestershire all notes above one pound were made payable, both at the place of their issue and in London. And he would add, as a practical man, that, in ordinary times, he could not see what difference it could make to a country banker whether he paid his 5*l.* or his 20*l.* notes in the one place or the other, or whether they were payable in London only. And in times of alarm like the present, that man must possess more boldness than he himself possessed, who would venture to refuse to pay one of his five-pound notes in the country, even though justified by the form in so doing.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that the hon. member for Callington had reproached ministers with having acted without consulting practical men. He could assure that hon. gentleman, that they had consulted those whom they considered best informed upon the subject, and had done their best to procure the necessary information. The hon. member had complained also, that ministers had ill-treated country bankers, and had imputed to them an attempt to thwart the measures of government by suddenly narrowing their issues. They had not directly made that charge before; but if the hon. member would have it out, he now asserted that the country bankers had, by suddenly narrowing their issues, endeavoured to defeat the measure now before the committee. Ministers perceived their object, and proposed the remedy for the evil.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, that if any combination or understanding amongst the countrybankers to call in their smaller notes, in order to defeat the measures of government, existed, he was entirely ignorant of it, and totally disbelieved its existence. He wished to meet the right hon. gentleman's assertion with all deference; but thought he must have been greatly misinformed on the subject. The House in which he was concerned, had never issued one-pound notes; and, therefore, personally he could wash his hands of the imputation. The branches, indeed, connected with that Bank had been in the habit of issuing them, and, he believed, continued issuing them still; but every one knew, particularly since the commencement of these debates, that the small notes being brought in on the bankers for payment, the amount in circulation must, of necessity, have been much reduced.—The hon. member for Montrose wished this private issue to be continued without limit. He (Mr. G.) wished to see it put an end to; and he was satisfied the only possible way in which the measures of government could have been carried into effect, was by the course which they had recently taken; namely, the allowing the Bank of England to continue to stamp their notes for a certain limited time, in order to take the place of the country paper, which might be cancelled or discredited. He acquitted the right hon. gentleman opposite of any inconsistency in conceding this alteration of their original plan; but he must repeat, that it had been forced on them by the obvious necessity of the case, and not by any conspiracy of the country bankers.

Mr. *J. Martin* thought it would be a great tax upon country bankers to make them find a fund for the payment of their notes in two places.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, he was bound to enter his protest against the imputations which the right hon. Foreign Secretary had cast upon the country bankers, and to say that he defied the right hon. gentleman to prove his assertion, or to show that there had been the slightest combination among them for the purpose of withdrawing their notes. That the notes had been withdrawn was the fault of ministers themselves. They had cried them down when they were the main, and almost the only currency of the country; and the consequence was, that the bankers

had been compelled to withdraw them. The imputations conveyed in the paper circulated under the signature of the earl of Liverpool and the right hon. gentleman opposite, had led, in a great measure, to the alternative which was now made a ground of accusation against the country bankers, by throwing a discredit upon their notes. The panic had nearly subsided, credit was about to be restored, and the circulation of the country was on the point of resuming its wonted channels, when the right hon. gentleman brought in his measures; and from that time the notes of the country bankers were returned so quickly upon their hands, that no prudent man would continue to press upon the public that which as often as he offered was as repeatedly rejected.

Mr. *Sykes* said, that the suggestion for making the country notes payable both in London and in the country, would impose the greatest hardship upon the bankers. Not only would the country bankers be under the necessity of providing double deposits, but their notes would no longer form part of the local circulation of their districts. He felt convinced that the country bankers were incapable of yielding to the impulse of such a principle as that imputed to them.

Mr. *Attwood* said, that nothing could more clearly show the gross ignorance of his majesty's ministers, of the real state of the circulation, than what had just fallen from the right hon. Secretary, relative to country bankers. His observation was utterly at variance with their credit and character, and he was quite sure the country would think so as soon as the expression used by the right hon. gentleman found its way abroad. He would venture to say, that a degree of ignorance, almost incredible, prevailed amongst those who ought to be acquainted with the real state of the country. He did not pretend to say that, in some of the country banking establishments, an erroneous system might not have been pursued; but he denied that this was the general character of the banking system throughout the country. After what had been stated by the hon. member for Leicester, he begged to withdraw what he had said of the midland banks, as far as regarded the banks of that district.

Mr. Alderman *Heygate* said, that if a disposition to contract their circulation had been observable amongst the country bankers, it had not arisen from a wish to obstruct the measures of government. On the contrary, whatever might have been their impression as to the policy of the course selected by ministers, as that course had been acted upon to a certain extent, they were now anxious, as far as lay in their power, to co-operate with them in pursuing it to a favourable issue.

Mr. *Carus Wilson* was acquainted with three country banks, whose notes were always payable at the places from whence they were issued; and this was certainly the most secure guarantee to the public, as the property and responsibility of country bankers must be better known at the places in which they reside than at a distance. For this reason he should give his cordial support to a measure which would have the effect of making country bank notes payable on demand at the places from which they were issued.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, that the clause he meant to propose would, he believed, meet all the objections. That clause would compel the payment of all notes under 20*l.* after the 5th of April, 1829, at the place where they were issued, and at such other places as the banker might please to insert. Unless they were so made payable, the banker should not have the power to issue them. If it suited the banker's purpose to have them made payable in various places, that was a consideration of considerable importance to him, but certainly they should be made payable, primarily, in the place where they were issued. As to the objection raised on account of the increased capital which would be required, that was a question for the bankers, and not for that committee.

The clause proposed by Mr. Huskisson was then agreed to.

Mr. *Hume* next proposed a clause, by which the public should be made acquainted, at specified periods, with the number of notes issued by the Bank of England.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* did not mean to say that some arrangement of this kind might not hereafter be advisable, but he felt considerable objection to the adoption of such a proposition now. If such a motion was agreed to, it would be leading to surmise and speculation with respect to particular banks, and such surmise and speculation would probably lead to disastrous consequences. He therefore hoped the hon. member would not press it.

The clause was withdrawn.

Mr. *Monck* rose to move a clause, pro-

viding that the holders of 1*l.* notes should, in the event of a banker's failure, have the priority of proving their debts before all other creditors; and that they should be paid 20*s.* in the pound before other creditors received any thing. This, he conceived, was due to the interest of the poor, who were the most likely to suffer, in consequence of their having a number of these small notes in hand.

Mr. *Rickford* opposed the proposition. It appeared, that some gentlemen thought the chancellor of the Exchequer had not done sufficient to injure the country bankers, and came forward, in consequence, to assist him.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* could not conceive any principle, in law or equity, which could bear out the hon. member in giving a preference to one set of creditors over another. Where was this preference, if once allowed, to stop?

The clause was negatived, and the House resumed.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday, February 28.

CORN LAWS.] Lord *King* said, he had a petition against the job of jobs, the Corn-laws, to present, from the city of Rochester. He thought the people in a Kentish town might justly complain of the tax; because, in the next county to Kent, the county of Calais, corn might be got for little more than half the price that it could be bought for in Kent. It was quite natural for them to wish to abolish the Corn-laws, which made this great difference. The Kentish landlords might say, that if the price were reduced one-half, the whole agricultural interest would be ruined. But if, by repealing the Corn-laws, the price would be reduced one-half, which he did not believe would be the case, that only more fully exposed the folly of that act, by which the power of a great confederacy was enabled to enforce so enormous a tax on the community at large for the benefit of the landlords and parsons.

The Earl of *Darnley* put it to the good sense and the good nature of his noble, friend whether he thought the agitation of this delicate question, night after night, could be of any service; or whether, indeed, it could be productive of any thing but evil. If his noble friend was resolved not to follow the wise course marked out by ministers, not to agitate this topic in the present session, he might bring in a measure, and then he would have an opportunity of debating the question. But he put it to his noble friend, whether, in the present state of the country, when numbers were hardly able to get bread at any price, it was consistent with good sense to instil into the minds of the people, that it was the landed interest in that and the other House of parliament, which kept up a law that tended to starve them. He hoped, whenever the question were brought before their lordships, that it would be discussed with no view to their own narrow and paltry interests, but, as indeed he was confident it would, with a view to the protection of all the interests of the country.

Lord *King* said, that knowing from what quarter this good advice came, he could not think of following it. His noble friend might pursue one course; but he was determined to persevere in another. His noble friend joined in the sentiments of a noble earl, who on a former night had expressed a hope that "little harangues" would not be made on this subject. Now, that might be a very good course for those who were supporters of the Corn-laws, but it was one which he could never adopt, decidedly opposed as he was to those laws. The reasons urged to induce him to abstain from those "little harangues" were precisely those which must induce him to persevere. The opponents of the Corn-laws had no chance of success, but by the subject being debated day after day. They had already been jilted on one or two occasions, when it was expected the question would be brought under consideration.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, the noble lord must have a very different idea of debating a question, from what he entertained, if he thought such a perpetual recurrence to it, a debate. Last session he had constantly made attacks on the bench of bishops, and seemed to suppose that was debating the Catholic question. In the same manner he had attacked the learned lord on the woolsack, as if he supposed that he was debating the Chancery question, while he was uttering witticisms on the lord chancellor. The noble lord must have a very strange idea of debating, if he supposed that sarcasms, or downright abuse, of the landed interest, was the best method of discussing the Corn question. The noble lord had said they wished to starve the poor; but when there was

that difference between the value of paper and gold, who was the first man to insist on his rents being paid in gold? Why, the very noble lord who now talked of the landed interest starving the people. The noble lord sometimes talked of the restriction of the Bank, but who was the principal author of that restriction?

The Duke of *Athol* said, that the noble lord had lately presented a similar petition from the weavers of Perth, who, a few years ago, in a time of general distress, were principally supported by the landed interest. Not less than 1,500 of them were maintained entirely at the expense of the landed proprietors, and he had in his possession a letter expressing their grateful thanks for the succour afforded to them. The petition which they had intrusted to the noble lord was a poor return for so much kindness on the part of the landed interest. The noble lord endeavoured to irritate the poor against the landed interest, and in doing this, he seemed to be guided neither by wisdom nor good sense, nor gentlemanly conduct. Such attacks were derogatory to the dignity of their lordships. He pledged himself, whenever the question was brought forward, to examine it without any regard to individual interest, but solely with a view to its effects on the interests of the whole kingdom.

Lord *King* said, that he should always tell the truth, whether it were agreeable to the noble duke or not. As to the petition from Perth, he knew nothing more of it than that it was put into his hands to present to their lordships; but if the noble duke had formerly 1,500 weavers to subsist, he was likely, under the present system, to have 3000 next year. A noble earl had implied, that he had been the cause of the Bank Restriction act; but, in this the noble earl had made a strange mistake, for the Bank Restriction act was passed in 1797, and the transaction to which he alluded did not take place till 1811. The noble earl might have learned the reason for his conduct, if he had turned to a noble lord (Bexley) a few paces on his left hand. On a certain day in June, in that year, the then chancellor of the Exchequer had placed a resolution on the Journals of the House of Commons, declaring that the paper circulation of the country and gold were equivalent in value. He was astonished how so absurd, so contemptible a statement, could have been made by any man, and still more astonished that it should have been gravely received in a popular assembly. On account of its absurdity, he had resolved to put it to the test, and he gave notice to his tenants, within one month after that declaration appeared, that he would receive nothing but gold in payment of his rent. The government was then forced to adopt a measure introduced into that House, and as they could not convince the country that paper was equivalent to gold, they made a law to prevent all payments in gold. He had neither hurt, nor wished to hurt, any person by that measure, which he had only adopted as a test of the accuracy of the chancellor of the Exchequer's resolution. He had at the time explained his conduct in that House, and made as good a defence as he could. He thought the noble earl had a little overcharged what he had said about debating, as he did not suppose that his "little harangues," as the noble earl called them, were debates. He must also deny, that he had ever stated that the landed interest starved the poor. He never had stated any such thing. ["You called it the job of jobs," from the earl of Limerick]. He had no doubt done so, and he believed it the greatest job that ever was.

The Earl of *Limerick*, recommended the noble lord, for his own sake, not to repeat the same story every day, or, like the parrots, it might happen not to attract attention.

Ordered to lie on the table.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, February 28.

Slavery.] Numerous petitions were presented, praying for the Abolition of Slavery.

Lord *Palmerston*, on presenting one from the University of Cambridge, said, that the petitioners highly approved of the resolutions passed by that House in 1823, and the zeal with which the government had acted in endeavouring to carry the object into effect. He was glad to have the honour of presenting this petition. It could not but be gratifying to all those who wished well to the cause, to see the University of Cambridge taking a prominent part among those who were desirous of putting an end, in a gradual and practical manner, to negro slavery in the colonies. It would have been strange if it had been otherwise among those who were to prepare, and those who were to become future legislators of Great Britain.

It would have been strange, if they had not felt the impropriety of the continuation of a state of things so contrary to the principles of the British constitution. It would have been strange if those who had the charge of preparing the ministers of our religion had not felt adverse to a condition of society so contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion. He would not enter into details upon a subject which was so soon to come more formally before them, and had only to express his decided concurrence in the prayer of the petition. The House had done much when it had abolished the traffic in slaves; but having abolished it, they were not to rest there. They had the further duty to perform, of proceeding to lay the foundation of the gradual extinction of negro slavery. No man thought that, in the present state of the West Indies, slavery could be at once abolished. Such a sudden abolition, besides the sacrifice of other interests, would be most injurious to the negroes themselves. But if the resolution of 1823 were steadily carried into effect, the gradual abolition would take place. It was a matter of great regret, that the colonial legislatures should have shown such a disposition to resist the operation of those resolutions. But, if so humble an individual as himself might offer an opinion, he would state to the colonists that there appeared at present, in this country, a strong feeling to deal tenderly with their interests, and that they ought to take advantage of that feeling while it lasted. It was in vain for them to think that, however they might retard, they could ultimately defeat a measure supported by the concurrent sentiments of the people of Great Britain. If they persevered in their resistance, they might raise against themselves such a storm of public opinion as no prudent man would wish to encounter.

Ordered to be printed.

Military Discipline—Tenth Hussars.] Sir *F. Burdett* said, he was anxious to put a question relative to a subject of considerable importance. He wished to inquire whether the attention of the commander-in-chief had been called to a very extraordinary statement, relative to the treatment experienced by a soldier in Exeter, and which, if true, would demand an immediate inquiry.

Mr. *Peel* replied, that as he happened to be in possession of some information on the subject, he would communicate it to the House. He had inquired from sir H. Taylor, secretary to the commander-in-chief, whether the attention of that illustrious person had been called to the subject; and he was informed, that his royal highness, on being made acquainted with the statement, directed an immediate inquiry; and he had every reason to believe that the statement, in all its parts, was greatly exaggerated, and in many particulars wholly unfounded. But, at all events, an immediate inquiry had been set on foot.

Sir *H. Vivian* said, that the statement was, to a great extent, exaggerated. An offer was made to the officer concerned, that the columns of a newspaper would be open to his refutation of the statement; but he replied, that he did not think it worth his while to reply to any thing that might appear in a newspaper, but would assist the investigation which the commander-in-chief had directed. The lieutenant-colonel was accordingly sent down to Exeter, and an inquiry would be immediately instituted. Knowing the prejudice which last year had been excited against that regiment most unjustly, he was disposed to think the statement was greatly exaggerated. He verily believed, that so far from there being any foundation for blame against the commanding officer, the transaction arose entirely from the strong inclination which he felt to avoid the infliction of corporal punishment, and which induced him to resort to severe drills and other punishments as substitutes.

Commercial Distress.] Mr. *Thomas Wilson* being loudly called on by the House, said, that before he proceeded with the motion of which he had given notice, for a select committee to inquire into the present distresses of the commercial world, he wished to know from the chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any thing had occurred, in the course of the day, to render it necessary for him to make a communication to the House?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that in answer to the appeal which had been made to him by the hon. member for the city of London, he had to state to the House, that a communication had taken place between his majesty's Government and the Bank, for the purpose of ascertaining how far that body would be disposed to extend relief to the existing depression in the trading, commercial, and manu-

facturing interests of the country, by such a departure from their ordinary rules and practice as would be involved in the principle of advancing money on the security of goods. And in answer to that communication, he was able to state, that the Bank had expressed their acquiescence in the principle, and had now under their consideration the best means of giving effect to such intention.

Mr. *T. Wilson* said, after what had fallen from the chancellor of the Exchequer, it would only be necessary for him to make a very few observations; although he thought the right hon. gentleman might have gone further. It was of the highest importance, that if any thing more was intended, it should be perfectly understood, and that the House should be rightly informed on the subject. What he understood to be the case was, that a communication had been made, that there was no disinclination to the proposition on the part of the Bank, and that that body would make an advance of three millions of money, upon goods, on the understanding that the government would bring forward some measure to bear them harmless, and afford some facilities in regard to their issues until October. If this was the nature of the arrangement, he should hail it with the utmost satisfaction. The Bank had done themselves honour to a degree, far beyond his powers of description; but he was unable to express the same sentiment towards his majesty's government. They had allowed the distresses of the country to proceed to too great an extent, and they were quite culpable in allowing such a state of things to exist from week to week, without adopting some measure of relief. However, he was happy that an arrangement had been come to; and if the proposed relief would have the effect of invigorating trade, and restoring public credit, he should not be fastidious as to the mode; although he was convinced that the measure proposed was not the best way of affording relief. But he hoped the advance of three millions would produce very general good. The country was much indebted to the Bank for using their best efforts to diminish the present alarming distress. The relief would not apply to the merchants of London merely, but to the commercial and manufacturing interests of the country. The Bank had done their duty nobly, and he should therefore ask for leave to withdraw the motion of which he had given notice.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that, before that motion was acceded to, he was desirous to reply more specifically to the points adverted to by the hon. member for London. He had before stated, that the question was under the consideration of the Bank, as to the best mode of extending aid to remove the present distresses of the country. He had now to state, that it was the intention of the Bank to carry their advances to a point not exceeding three millions. They would not, of course, be bound to go to that extent, but that was the utmost limit to which they would feel themselves justified in advancing. It was stated to the Bank, that it was the intention of government to propose to parliament, in the course of the session, a measure by which a considerable portion of the advances made by the Bank to Government would be paid off; and he had now further to add, that his right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade, meant to submit to parliament the propriety of accelerating the period at which the measure he had introduced last session, relative to the law of Merchant and Factor, should come into operation. His right hon. friend would do so for the purpose of effecting the objects which the House had in view when that measure was submitted to their consideration, and of facilitating the purpose which they now had in view. It was only at a late period of the day that he had been made acquainted with what the Bank had proposed to do; it was, therefore, impossible he could have communicated it earlier. Under these circumstances, he thought the hon. member for London would be acting a prudent part in withdrawing his motion.

Mr. *Pearse* thought it necessary to set the House right as to the communication which had been made. The Bank was strongly of opinion, that the other mode of relieving the distress of the country would be much preferable to that now under consideration; but being most desirous to meet the present difficulties of the country, they had consented to waive their own opinions. He was sanguine in his expectations that so much money would not be required. Confidence was the great thing to be established; and he was satisfied that confidence would be restored even by the knowledge that something was about to be done.

Mr. *Ellice* was desirous to know whether it was in contemplation to extend

this relief to the great manufacturing towns, and whether personal security, as well as security on goods, would be received?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* replied, that the precise mode in which the plan might be carried into effect he was unable to state. One of the main considerations which had influenced the Bank, in the course they proposed to adopt, was the hope of being able to contribute to the relief, not merely of the city of London, but in an especial manner to diminish the distress which existed in the manufacturing districts.

Mr. *Tierney* wished to be informed whether it was intended to proceed by bill on the measure for securing the Bank?

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he had not stated that it was the intention of government to bear the Bank harmless. All he had said was, that government meant to propose to parliament a measure which would reduce the advances made by the Bank to government, and relieve the Bank from the embarrassment consequent thereon. Nor was it his intention to propose any bill for the purpose of establishing a commission. The measure which government meant to propose, was one that would afford relief, by accelerating the operation of the law between merchant and factor.

Mr. *Tierney* said, he understood the right hon. gentleman perfectly, but was sorry he could not agree with him. He was still convinced, as strongly as when he had first expressed the opinion, of the propriety of issuing Exchequer-bills; and although he believed the proposed measure might have a good effect, still he was persuaded it would not have the desirable effect of restoring confidence. But he was at a loss to know how to argue this question; for, in fact, there was nothing begun: but he trusted some opportunity would be afforded him and his friends of expressing their opinions on the subject. It appeared to him that the measure they talked about was nothing more than a mere shift to do something, which, in effect, was nothing. The Bank had certainly behaved very kindly in putting themselves in the gap when nobody else would. But then, this measure did not come recommended by their approval. It was not brought forward like the measure of Mr. Pitt, which was recommended by a committee. The House was asked to adopt it, because, forsooth, a noble earl at the head of his majesty's government had thought proper to declare, that nothing on earth would induce him to consent to the issue of Exchequer-bills; and then, to save that noble earl's honour from stain, the country was to be left to struggle through her distresses. This was not the kind of treatment the country deserved. If this was not a question for the interference of the legislature, he did not know what was. He trusted he should have a proper opportunity of expressing his opinions on this subject, for he felt it deeply. He did not wish to oppose government on the question of the currency, for he agreed with their general principles; but he should disgrace himself if he gave his support to such a measure as this. But, if the chancellor of the Exchequer would tell him when it would be convenient to discuss this question, he should be happy to accommodate the right hon. gentleman as to the period for telling him all the objections he had to the proposition. But the measure, as it now stood, was all soap and oil—no one could lay hold of it. The government of the country brought forward their grand panacea for all the evils of the country, which no man could discuss.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he did not feel very sensible of the accommodation proffered by the right hon. gentleman, in requesting a convenient opportunity for censuring the conduct of himself and the government. However, he must say he should have no objection to meet the discussion on fair grounds, if the right hon. gentleman should think proper to bring forward the question in the shape of a specific motion, or should avail himself of the opportunity of his right hon. friend's motion relating to the law of Merchant and Factor. He understood the right hon. gentleman to want an opportunity for calling the attention of the House to the question; if so, he had better choose his own day, and then the government would do their best to contend with the arguments of the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. *Manning* thought it would be much more convenient to the merchants to have a commission established; but, as the measure had only been agreed upon that afternoon, it would be impossible to enter into all its details at present.

Sir *Francis Burdett* said, he thought the conduct of government calculated to ispire any thing but confidence. As

this was a subject on which almost every gentleman entertained some difference of opinion, he could not help thinking the House itself was hardly in a state to come to any legislative measure upon the subject, and therefore he regretted most exceedingly that the hon. member for the city of London had withdrawn his motion. Whether the accommodation came from the Bank or the Government was, in his opinion, one and the same thing to the public. All he wished was, that it should be done in a way which would give the most effectual relief to those most distressed. He could see no other reason upon earth for giving the accommodation in an indirect way by the cumbersome machinery of the Bank, instead of giving it in a direct way by the Government, than the declaration of the noble earl at the head of the Treasury, that nothing should induce him to consent to an issue of Exchequer-bills through commissioners. The noble lord had precedents for such a measure; and why he should be anxious to set a new precedent and relinquish the old ones, which had been completely justified by their result, he could by no means conjecture. The present measures were not calculated to afford immediate relief—on the contrary, they were all measures of a prospective and doubtful nature. What, then, was the House doing? Legislating in the dark, without information, when it was not hurried for time, since all its measures were to take effect at a future day. Reflection and thought ought to be bestowed on subjects of such importance as those which had been recently agitated; and yet parliament had shown a disposition to do any thing rather than bestow reflection and thought upon them. For his own part, he dissented entirely from all the measures which the House had hitherto adopted. He would not enter into a discussion of them at present, because it would be irregular; but one thing he would say regarding them, that he could not agree with any man, on either side of the House, in believing that it was either necessary, expedient, or possible, to return with haste to a currency of a metallic nature. It was not possible, he said, to pay in cash, and support the monstrous establishments of the country. And that consideration naturally led him to another; namely, that in the present distressed state of the country, it became the ministers of the Crown to come down to parliament with reduced estimates of those establishments—with such reduced estimates as the country ought to have had even if there had been no distress, and such as it was constitutionally entitled to in this, the eleventh year of peace [hear, hear!]. This was a crying evil; and he was convinced that no difference of opinion existed on the subject out of doors, whatever might be the feeling within the walls of that House. This was not a just return to the country—it was not treating the people with consideration or fairness, after all they had suffered, and the continued support they had given the government. As to the measure which had been opened to them that evening, it was the only one of the recent measures of administration to which he could give his concurrence. It did appear to him most extraordinary that government should have augmented, instead of allaying, the late panic at its commencement; that it should have withheld relief at the moment when it was calculated to be most effectual; that it should have proceeded for a time on the stern path of principle, without reflecting on the mischief it was inflicting by so doing; and that it should not have departed from it until it was compelled,—yes, he repeated the words, until it was compelled—to do something for the immediate relief of the community. He was of opinion, that if the issuing of Exchequer-bills had been tried in the first instance, it would have done great good, and he was of that opinion, because the experiment had been tried formerly, and had been eminently successful. The government, he allowed, was placed in an awkward situation; for the question was now come to this—whether the country should continue to be distressed, or whether there should not be an immediate advance of money to relieve it. All the merchants of the country—and on such a matter they were undoubtedly the best judges—thought that the most effectual relief which could be administered to them would be, by an immediate issue of Exchequer-bills. But his majesty's ministers had conceived a different opinion; and because they had once expressed it in public, they were determined not to recede from it. He thought that there was clear proof in the proceedings of ministers, that they had not sufficiently considered the measures which they had propounded to parliament. The first

proof was in the alteration which they had made in their plan for regulating the circulation of one and two pound Bank of England notes; and the second, in their acceeding to a plan which they had formerly scouted. Their whole course of proceeding ought to induce the House to pause in passing these measures; but it ought to induce them not to pause one moment in reducing the enormous and overgrown establishments of the country.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he did not rise for the purpose of continuing this discussion, which, it must be admitted, was already sufficiently irregular. He could not, however, allow the present opportunity to pass without stating, that he concurred with every observation which had fallen from his right hon. friend, the member for Knaresborough, and with almost every observation which had fallen from the hon. baronet at the close of his speech. If the measure which they had heard of for the first time that night were one which ought to be resorted to at all, it ought to have been resorted to before the present moment. The true mode for government to have acted was to have done openly, fairly, and at once, that which it was now going to do in a round-about way—in a way of which the Bank, if it were called upon to make advances to the extent, or to half the extent, of the sum which they had just heard, would be the first party to repent; for the arrangement into which it had entered was as contrary to all the true principles of banking as any measure could possibly be.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that when the fit opportunity should arrive, he would undertake to show, in the first place, that this measure was not the same as an issue of Exchequer-bills, and that many of the objections which applied to such an issue did not apply to it; and, in the second place, that the reluctance of government to issue Exchequer-bills was not founded upon any idle respect to the words of a noble earl, but upon a candid and anxious investigation of all the objections to which it was liable, and a sincere conviction that it was not their duty to consent to such a proposal. That opinion he would undertake to justify at the proper season, by such arguments as he trusted the House would deem conclusive.

Mr. *Tierney* said, that, as a motion regarding the issue of Exchequer-bills stood for that night, he gave the right hon. gentleman notice, that to satisfy his own mind, he should avail himself of it, to discuss the project which he had just opened to them.

The motion was then withdrawn.

EXCHEQUER BILLS FOR PUBLIC WORKS.] Mr. *Ellice* said, that after the declaration which his right hon. friend had just made, of his intention to discuss the propriety of the Bank advancing money upon deposits, to merchants, upon the motion which he then held in his hand, he felt himself justified in saying, that he fully concurred with his right hon. friend in the remarks which he had made upon that notable project. He did think, that if government had come down to the House immediately after the speech from the throne; if they had brought forward their financial statement for the year, and had announced their intention of relieving the Bank of the debt which they owed it, and of reducing it to purchase Exchequer-bills in the market for the sake of increasing their price; and if they had further stated that they were ready to advance Exchequer-bills to merchants on their goods, they would not only have restored the country to confidence, but would have given that facility to the execution of their own measures, which would have been highly advantageous to their successful accomplishment. Having said thus much upon that subject, he would leave it in the hands of his right hon. friend, who was much better able to discuss it than he was, and would proceed forthwith to the explanation of his own motion. It would be in the recollection of the House, that two acts had passed, enabling his majesty's government to issue to commissioners Exchequer-bills, to be employed towards the completion of public works and for the employment of the poor. The commissioners under these two acts had proceeded from year to year, to make sundry advances to different classes of individuals for the purpose of carrying on public works and employing the necessitous poor. Reports had been from time to time laid before the Treasury, which had always found their way to the table of the House; but he did not find there had been any direct return to a motion to lay on the table an account of all issues made by the commissioners, and which appeared the more expedient, as such a measure was directly pointed out by the acts to which

he had referred. On referring to the documents, he found that the commissioners had advanced monies, not only for the completion of public works, but for many other purposes connected with the trading interest to a certain extent. They had made advances to the owners of coal-mines, and to persons engaged in fisheries; and that, upon one occasion, they had made a large advance to a banking concern in the north, upon the ground that it was deeply connected with the coal trade, and that if it had stopped, the consequence must be to throw a great number of the labouring class of people out of employment. These facts, together with the understanding, that a large sum at the disposal of the commissioners remained at present undisposed of, had induced him to think that the surplus might be applied to the relief of the manufacturing classes, with as great success as had attended the advances to the persons engaged in the coal-trade. It appeared that the government had found a means of throwing upon the Bank the task of supplying money for the necessities of the country. He thought it, therefore, highly necessary, that the House should be put in possession of the mode in which the issues of Exchequer-bills had hitherto been made, as well as of the principle which had governed those advances. The money had been lent for the making of roads, canals, and gaols and the securities for the repayment had been of various descriptions. In some instances they were personal, and in others were made upon the rates and tolls belonging to the various works. He should therefore conclude by moving, "That there be laid before the House an account in detail, of all advances of money, and Exchequer-bills for public works, or the employment of the poor, by commissioners appointed under the acts of 57 Geo. 3, c. 34 and 124, and 3 Geo. 4, c. 86, specifying the purpose and time for which each loan was granted; the parties to whom granted; the nature of the security; rate of interest; any repayments hitherto made; and the amount now due and outstanding, and when payable: Also, an Account of Exchequer-bills undisposed of, and still applicable, under the provisions of the said acts."

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he hoped that, in objecting to the terms in which this motion was couched, he should not be deemed captious. To the main object of the motion he did not mean to offer any opposition; but he thought that the names of the parties to whom, and the nature of the securities on which the money had been lent, could not be necessary to the purpose which the hon. gentleman avowed, while it might be inconvenient to the parties concerned.

Mr. *Hume* did not see the weight of the objection. The names of the parties at least, if not the nature of the securities, ought to be laid before parliament, that it might be seen whether or not the advances had been made to the persons, and for the purposes contemplated by the acts.

Mr. *Ellice* thought it quite necessary that he should have the names of the persons to whom the various advances had been made. With respect to the securities, he only wanted to know the nature of them; and the return would be sufficient, if it stated that the money had been lent upon personal security, or on the rates or tolls. He by no means wanted to know the names of the persons who had become securities for the repayment of the advances.

Mr. *Tierney* then rose. He said, that he had come down to the House in the hope that some discussion would take place respecting the measure proposed with respect to the Bank. He now, however, understood, that, owing to some arrangement which had been made, the Bank of England were, with the sanction of government, to take upon themselves to issue Exchequer-bills to the amount of 3,000,000*l*. He had hoped to hear some reason assigned for the opposition of government to the measures originally proposed by himself and others, as to the expediency of the government issuing Exchequer-bills in preference to the advance of money, which, it was said, the Bank was to make on the security of goods; and, on the present occasion, he was really under some disadvantage, from the circumstance of hearing this sort of arrangement come behind instead of before him. That the country was never in a state of greater distress than at that moment, was admitted on all hands. Every body was agreed in that House, as well as out of it, that some relief must be given, and that immediately; but, as to the mode in which that relief was to be administered, his majesty's ministers had a different opinion from the rest of the community. It had been proposed, on a former occasion, that it should be by means of Exchequer-bills, in the way he had just men-

tioned. No method appeared to him so free from objection as this. The experience of the effect which it had produced in 1793, proved not only that it was advantageous in practice, but that, theoretically, it was the best mode that could be devised, of restoring general confidence throughout the country; because it would show, that ministers did not wish to shrink from the danger which they saw around them. At present, so far from that being the case, it appeared that the Bank of England was the only body that did not shrink from this danger. As well for what they had done, as for what it seemed was now to be received from their hands, he felt himself obliged to say that the country was deeply indebted to the Bank of England. He wished he could say as much of his majesty's ministers; but he could not. Great stress had been laid, on a former evening, upon the principle, that the legislature ought not to interfere for the relief of distress purely commercial, and which had been induced by no other than commercial causes. No man living could agree more warmly in that, as a general principle, than he did, and no man would struggle more vehemently for its support; but the question to be decided, before that principle could be applied, was, whether the actual distress had been induced by causes purely commercial—whether there had not been such a departure from general principles, as made it necessary to have recourse to extraordinary measures for relief. In another place he understood the same language had been held; and when the circumstances of 1793 were quoted by those who thought with him on this subject, it was said there was nothing in the state of affairs in 1793 like those of the present time, because the former distress arose out of political circumstances. He thought he could show that this assertion was not correct. It was the fashion, he knew, to charge mercantile men in the gross with overtrading, and with running to excess in their speculations. He did not know whether it was necessary to inquire into what distinction this made between the present and the former state of the country, or whether it might not be more safe and satisfactory to consider, that, as the same result was experienced, the same, or nearly the same, causes must have produced both. But even if this charge, so often repeated against the whole body of commercial men, were well founded, who, he should like to know, was it, that led them and the country into those excesses, by inspiring the belief that the resources of the country were sufficient to justify engaging in any enterprise? Who did this, if not the right hon. gentleman opposite, in conjunction with the Bank of England? Did they not run together the same great race of what was called prosperity; and were not the extensive issues a principal means of keeping up that which experience had proved to be fictitious, but which was, not long ago, roundly asserted to be permanent? Why, then, he did think it was too much now to turn round upon the people and say to them, "Because you believed all we told you, and trusted implicitly that all we said must be true, you are not now entitled to relief under the distress which your confidence has brought upon you." And yet this was the language of his majesty's ministers. They said the commercial men were not deserving of relief, because they might have seen their way more clearly. If they had looked to the proceedings of the Bank of England, and of the country banks, would that have enabled them to see their way more clearly; or would it not rather have helped to continue them in that delusion which nothing but the sharp pressure of distress had been able to awake them from? He did not say that the lending of money on mortgage by the Bank was recommended by the government; but who could deny that they encouraged and sanctioned it? He knew the manliness of the chancellor of the Exchequer too well to believe, that, although he might not be the person to have advised that measure, he would deny having been the cause of it. But, if this should be denied, he would ask whether the government had not, by its own unequivocal acts, led the way to that confidence in the prosperity, which had been found to rest on so rotten a foundation? What effect, other than this, was the measure respecting the holders of the 4 per cent stock calculated to produce? Did not those persons lose for ever one-eighth of their incomes, and for no other reason than because the country was discovered to be in a state of glorious prosperity—which lasted about nine months? Had they not a right to complain, that they had been the victims of this imaginary prosperity—they who had purchased stock in the 4 per cents, and who found their interest reduced for no other reason than that? It was true that when they pur-

chased, they run the risk of being paid off at par, when the resources of the country should be so flourishing as to permit of that measure; but, did they ever think that they should become losers of their money by means of an artificial rise of the value of stock produced by the combination of the Bank and the government? He knew he might be told, that all men were masters of their own stock, and that if they sustained any loss, they did so with the full exercise of an option to continue their stock upon the new terms, or to be paid off at par. But this was not true to the extent at which it was stated. It was not true of families, of children, of trustees, and of others who had not the power of removing the stock in which they were interested. These persons were all of them entitled to consideration and to redress, if it could reach them; but that was impossible. This had all been brought about by the extravagant language which ministers had indulged in, and by the immense issues of paper from the Bank. The leading topics of the last year were the actual and prospective wealth of the country; and what was the consequence? If ever the commercial world could claim the assistance of the government, it was now; because all that they were at present suffering was brought upon them mainly and substantially by the conduct and language of government, and by that alone. The right hon. gentleman now said, that they ought to have foreseen what would happen. Did he foresee what would happen? If he did, what could he say about the reduction of the 4 per cents? If he did not, why was not the commercial world entitled to all the relief that the government could give them? And what justice was there in the right hon. gentleman's turning round upon them, and refusing that relief, because they had not foreseen that which no man could foresee but those who were behind the curtain? Never had there been, he believed, an occasion so pressing as that which the House was now called upon to consider; and never had any proposal been made which held out a fairer prospect of success than that which the right hon. gentleman had rejected. He was at a loss to conceive any reasonable grounds upon which that refusal could be justified. There was nothing in the circumstances of the country that should induce it. Day by day money was said to be coming in, and nothing was wanting to bring it into general circulation but the restoration of confidence. What was the cause that had produced the failure of that confidence, but the folly into which the whole nation had been plunged during the last two years? A man purchased 3 per cent stock at 96, and he now found they were down at 73. He could not tell the reason for this fall, nor could any man help him to discover it. People had been led on, step by step, to the giddy eminence from which at length they had so unexpectedly fallen. This was the work of the government, and this was a reason —to him a conclusive one—why the government should interfere to remedy that evil which they, and they alone, had occasioned. Another reason, and not a less forcible one, was, that nothing, in fact, was wanting but public confidence. By adopting the measure which he had proposed, the House would effectually restore that confidence. Persons were flocking from all parts of the country with complaints of the distress which they felt, and imploring ministers that something might be done without delay for their relief. He did not doubt that these applicants were received with perfect urbanity and good manners, by the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues, for nothing else could be experienced from those who at present directed his majesty's councils. But, they were answered, one and all, with the greatest coldness, that the government could and would do nothing for them, let their distress be what it might. But, said the right hon. gentleman to the suffering commercial men who beset him —"I'll tell you what I'll do. I can't give you any relief myself, but there is a gentleman who lives not far from here, and I'll give you a letter of recommendation to him. He'll lend you as much money as you want." And thus it was that the ministers got rid of their importunate claimants for relief, by turning them over to the Bank of England. But then, when they got to the Bank of England, they were not much better off; for when they offered to deposit their goods as a security for the loans they asked, the Bank said, "No; we don't deal in those commodities—they are not in our line." But, then, upon reading the charter of the Bank — for the first time, of course—it was discovered, that they did possess the power of lending money on goods. They had been all wrong for a hundred years past, and it was just now found out, that they were

the most proper people in the world to be applied to in the present crisis. Now, he did not mean to deny that the Bank had a right to lend money in this way, although the discovery was so recent a one. The right hon. gentleman said there was no doubt of it; but an honourable Bank director said, that the power was only a permissive one. The right hon. gentleman had a satisfactory answer to that, when he told him that the power was just the same as that which enabled them to deal in gold and bills of exchange. This was true, and could not be denied here or elsewhere. He believed that, when that power was given, the Bank got it from the government—not because they were entitled to it, but because they thought it right (and he could not blame them) to get all the power they could. Well, then, upon reading the charter a little further, it was discovered (he spoke only upon the authority of an extract which he had read in the newspapers, but he believed it was correct), that the Bank directors had a right to sell the goods on which they lent money, for the purpose of procuring repayment of their loans. It was clear, therefore, that the Bank had the power which it was now proposed to call upon them to exercise; but it nevertheless appeared to him, that they were, of all others, the most unfit to be so called upon at the present moment. What authority could they have that would enable them to discharge the office which would be thus forced upon them? The right hon. gentleman opposite abjured the commission; but, had the Bank any power to administer an oath? No. Had the commission? Yes. The act gave them that power which was necessary for them to investigate the applications made for relief, and to examine all parties on oath. The Bank could have nothing of that sort. They could only issue money; and that, he contended, was not the thing that was wanted. It was confidence alone; for of money there was plenty. The inefficacy of any thing that could be done by the mere advance of money by the Bank had been lately shown in the most striking manner. Within the last fortnight, two millions had been advanced by the Bank for the purpose of Exchequer-bills. And what good had been the result? None, that he could perceive. He could not see that any rise had taken place in the public funds; and to an ignorant man, and one of limited capacity like himself, that was the only criterion by which he could form an opinion. What greater good, then, would be derived from the issue of three millions more in the same way? What reason was there to believe that the loan of money in this manner would relieve the distress? How was it to be issued? On the application of the parties, and in the same manner as by the commissioners in 1793? That, indeed, was what he wished, but that he was sure would be impossible. The charter of the Bank enabled them to lend money, but not to inquire who wanted it. On the former occasion persons had been engaged in the commission who had means of knowing, and could examine into the correctness of the applications? How was the Bank to be enabled to do this? How was partiality in the disposition of the money to be prevented? How were they to know that they did not lend to the wrong instead of the right men. How could they ascertain that they were not issuing a quantity of their notes which would be made use of in Stock-exchange, or in other speculations, and wholly independent of the suffering interests of commerce? What had been done in 1793 was, as it ought to be now, not so much to furnish a supply of money as to restore the paralyzed spirit of trade, by reinstating the confidence of the country. The good effects of that measure were felt instantly, and would be so now. If he possessed at this moment 10,000*l.* worth of goods, and went to his banker for an advance of money, he would tell him, that he was very sorry that he could not let him have a farthing in the present depressed state of the market. But if he went to him and said, "I have got 5,000*l.* in Exchequer bills," he would find immediately that his banker and his other friends would come forward to his assistance; and without even sending his Exchequer-bills into the market, he would be enabled to continue his business merely by the restoration of confidence. The general effect of the measure would be, to call out money which now lay dormant, —locked up—of which there was an immense quantity, and much more than the wants of the country required. The advance of 2,000,000*l.* had been in vain, and that of 3,000,000*l.* would be the same. If the government thought they could get rid of their difficulties for ever, by staving them off now upon the Bank of England, and by doling out 3,000,000*l.* through

their hands, they were quite mistaken. The measure of 1793 produced permanent and substantial good; there could be no difference of opinion on that subject. The result of that measure was now a matter of history. A formal report was made of it to the House, by which it appeared that 2,000,000*l.* had been issued, not a farthing of which had been lost; that it restored credit and confidence, alleviated and extinguished the distress, and put 4,000*l.* into the pockets of the country. In the face of this example, the ministers of the present day chose to say they would do nothing towards the relief of the distress, but that the Bank of England might. Why, then, if the Bank of England did, let them have the credit, and them only. The government, who had led the country into its present distressing condition, pursued a line of conduct which it required some temper even to discuss. If they thought fit to reduce, or rather to raise the Bank of England by this measure, in which they parted with a power which properly belonged to them, they would find hereafter ample cause to repent it; because they could have invented no means so likely to increase the power of the Bank to an extravagant degree. The Bank would be able to make out a case which would not only entitle them to great privileges; but, when the renewal of their charter came to be discussed, they would be known to be so useful, from their being the source from which alone assistance was to be procured in the time of need and distress, that all voices would be in their favour. The country gentlemen, who, of course, always voted very honestly, would support them; and particularly if there was any existing, or the prospect of any impending distress, every one would wish to be well with the only power who had the will as well as the means of assisting them. The Bank would be then remembered in this crisis to have done all they could, while the government had done nothing. The Bank had already opened their coffers for the assistance of the country. They had advanced 2,000,000*l.* It was true that had done no good, because it had had no effect in doing that which he could not sufficiently impress upon the House was the only thing wanting at this time; namely, the restoration of general confidence. It was obviously impossible that there could be any real want of money. There were now no foreign loans to swallow up the gold; and the apparent scarcity was caused only by that wild and senseless disposition to get gold for the purpose of looking at, or rather of hoarding it. This it was that had withdrawn the gold from circulation, and the want of confidence kept it in its retreats. It was in the power of the government, and beyond the reach of any other power, to effect that restoration. The example of that which had been done in Mr. Pitt's time, and which some whom the wreck of time had spared could well remember, ought to teach the government, that that was the safe and advantageous course for them to pursue. That had proved the salvation of the country. This which they wanted to substitute for it in the present emergency was mere milk and water. He knew very well that nothing was more easy for a man who possessed much less talent than the right hon. gentleman, to answer his speech, and to throw a mist over all he had said. But he was satisfied that the substantial good sense of the country was with him. And he was satisfied that if he could poll the persons interested in the prosperity of the country on the question, whether there should be three millions issued by the Bank of England, or two millions by the government in the form of Exchequer-bills, he should have an immense majority in favour of the latter. They knew—it was universally known—that the issue of Exchequer-bills would remedy the evils under which they suffered. That measure had been tried, and the result had been most satisfactory and successful. The one which it was now proposed to adopt was a mere dexterous device—a trick of special pleading on the construction of the Bank charter; and its sole object was to raise the directors of the Bank into a higher description of pawnbrokers. The directors submitted to it; but only because nothing else was to be done, and because living, as they did, in the city, surrounded by the commercial distress, they could not see it without attempting to relieve it by such means as the government chose to permit them to use. The ministers had plainly avowed their determination to do nothing, and something must absolutely be done. He was satisfied that the right hon. gentleman felt as keenly as any one the nature of the existing distress; and he regretted that he could not be prevailed on to adopt that which was a simple, approved, and efficacious

cious remedy. He (Mr. Tierney) was not one of those who contemplated Mr. Pitt's character with any great degree of admiration; but this he would say, that he was a great man—that he took the most comprehensive views of the financial situation of the country. Indeed, he never knew a man whose mind was more capable of embracing large concerns, and forming a correct judgment upon them, than Mr. Pitt, when he was himself. Ministers had Mr. Pitt's example to follow. On the present occasion, he was himself a Pittite. He called upon ministers to follow the steps of Mr. Pitt by issuing Exchequer-bills. Ministers assigned no other reason for not doing so, except that they had discovered the principle of Mr. Pitt's measure to be bad—the country, they said had no claim to the assistance of government, because they had brought their distresses upon themselves. Now, he thought that the country had the strongest claim upon the assistance of government, because they were made to believe by ministers—innocently enough, perhaps, on their parts—that their prosperity knew no bounds. Ministers thus encouraged those speculations in foreign loans, and other things, at which they were now so indignant. Ministers said, that the persons who had been engaged in extravagant speculations ought not to receive any assistance; but, might they not obtain it from the Bank under the arrangement now proposed? This could not happen if government would consent to issue Exchequer-bills; because the commissioners who would have the power of examining on oath, might ask the persons applying for assistance how they had incurred their difficulties. The Bank could enter upon no such inquiries, but would confine themselves to the lending of their money upon goods, or upon personal security. It appeared, from the report of the commissioners of 1793, that the greater part of the relief then afforded was advanced to the applicants rather upon the securities given by others than upon goods deposited by themselves.—As he had stated on a former occasion, he was not one of those who participated in the sort of alarm which had been raised from one end of the kingdom to the other. Much misunderstanding existed, in his opinion, with respect to the present situation of the country. He wished it not to be supposed that he blamed ministers for the measures which they had adopted. To the chancellor of the Exchequer he gave his warmest and heartiest thanks for the wholesome and sound measure which he had introduced, for the purpose of putting an end to the issue of one and two pound notes; but yet it was necessary to consider the effect of that measure. When ministers said, they had nothing to do in producing the difficulties of the country, but that the country had brought them all on themselves, might not the country say, "We did not pass the bill for putting an end to small notes?" Did not ministers know that the effect of that measure would be the abstraction of seven or eight millions from the currency, which must necessarily aggravate the existing distress? Again he must guard himself from being misunderstood. He did not object to the measure in question. He gave the chancellor of the Exchequer all possible credit for his recent policy. The right hon. gentleman might depend upon him for support. So long as the right hon. gentleman stood by himself, he would stand by him, like a good and faithful soldier. He could not, however, conceal from himself, that the abstraction of a considerable portion of the currency—the effect of the Promissory-notes bill—had caused much distress; and yet ministers would not consent to do that which alone could relieve the sufferings of the country. It was almost heart-breaking to a man, between whom and bankruptcy there was but a small line, to be told, "Government cannot afford you assistance, because it would be contrary to principle to do so." Was not the very plan recommended by ministers contrary to principle? It was absurd to talk of principle on such an occasion. It was, after all, only a question of convenience and good sense. It was necessary to consider what was best to be done on one day and what on another. To talk of principle with respect to the issuing of Exchequer-bills or Bank-notes, was, in his opinion, quite ridiculous. On account of the respect which he felt for the chancellor of the Exchequer, and the interest which he took in his character, he had felt it necessary, on the present occasion, to state the reason why he preferred an issue of Exchequer-bills to an issue of notes by the Bank. Past experience induced him to form a good opinion of the former measure; but, even if it had not past experience in its favour, he thought it was more likely to do good than the latter. He thought that if the

Bank lent money upon goods, they would be placed in a very invidious situation. On the one hand, they would be vested with extravagant powers; and on the other hand, their affairs would be placed in a state of jeopardy, of which it was perhaps impossible to foresee the consequences. The Bank must necessarily make large issues of paper, if the arrangement now proposed was determined upon; and it was not impossible that those persons who were on the watch to re-establish the system of currency which parliament had expressed its determination to put down, might hail such a measure with pleasure, and turn it to their advantage. The Bank was not in a situation to venture upon any hazardous experiments. The exchanges, it was true, were in our favour at present; but there were many reasons why they should not continue so. In the first place, it was unnatural that they should continue in our favour, at a time when there was an increased issue of paper money; and the moment any thing unnatural was discovered in our situation, it was for a wise man to suspect all that might happen. He apologized to the House for having trespassed so long on their attention. His only object was, to afford relief to the country. He viewed its present situation with an aching heart. He knew that many of the most amiable men in the country were at the present moment in a state of jeopardy. Could nothing be done to save them? Let not the chancellor of the Exchequer expose himself to have it said of him, at a future time, that there were sufferings which he might have averted from the country, and would not [cheers].

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that if he thought any consideration which he could give to the subject, after the full consideration which it must be obvious he had already bestowed upon it, could induce him to think that the mode of proceeding which the right hon. gentleman recommended was the most advisable to be pursued, he could assure him, that no unwillingness to abandon his own system, no fear of any reproaches which might be cast upon him for want of firmness or consistency, would induce him to abstain from adopting it; but the more deliberately he had considered the measure which the right hon. gentleman recommended as best calculated to effect what they all had in view, in relation either to the arguments which were advanced for or against it, the more objectionable it appeared to his mind. The right hon. gentleman had stated his case with the most perfect fairness—he had mixed nothing, not an atom of asperity with any of his observations; and though he had felt it his duty to comment on the conduct of government, and to blame them for the course which they had taken, he had done so in a manner of which no one had a right to complain, and indeed, as far as he was himself concerned, he felt personally beholden to him. The right hon. gentleman had however said, that government was called upon to take the particular course which he recommended, because, in his view, the conduct which they had previously held, and the language which they had previously used, had contributed, in a great degree, to produce that state of things to which it was now desirable to apply a remedy. Certainly the circumstances stated by the right hon. gentleman might make it incumbent on government to apply a remedy; but not any particular remedy, unless it could be clearly shown that the benefit to be derived from that particular remedy was so greatly superior to the evil consequences that might be apprehended from it, as to over-balance all the objections which could be offered to it. It was because he did not think that the remedy proposed by the right hon. member was of that description, that he could not bring himself to adopt it. He, however, was not disposed to admit, that the course which government and parliament had pursued for the last few years, deserved all the imputations which the right hon. gentleman had thought fit to cast upon it. The right hon. gentleman accused government of having been the original cause of the reduction of the rate of interest, which he said had led to excessive speculation. He had charged upon ministers the having produced that by original acts of their own. What were those acts? Various of the acts which the right hon. gentleman and others made a matter of blame to government, took place after the particular event to which the present distresses of the country were ascribed. The right hon. gentleman ascribed the reduction of the 5 per cents to some mysterious combination between government and the Bank. Under what circumstance did government propose that measure? It was proposed under the direct sanction of a parliamentary com-

mittee. In 1817, a committee of that House particularly recommended the reduction of the 5 per cents as a measure calculated to relieve the country, and diminish pro tanto the amount of the engagement which the national debt imposed upon it. It was not surprising, therefore, that when the rate of interest in 1822 was found to be such as favoured a reduction of the 5 per cents, government, acting upon the recommendation of the committee, should avail themselves of it, for the purpose of saving to the country an expense of 1,400,000*l.* a-year. It was, he thought, hardly fair to blame government for this measure, which they had resorted to under circumstances which he had stated. To return, however, to the point to which he had previously adverted. Many of the acts for which the right hon. gentleman found fault with ministers, took place not before, but subsequent to the reduction of the rate of interest. The passing of the one-and-two pound-note act, and the arrangement of the half-pay and pensions, took place subsequently to that measure. It was therefore impossible to charge on those acts the reduction of the rate of interest. He must most positively deny, that government endeavoured, by any combination with the Bank, to promote a state of things which should favour the reduction of the rate of interest. If government had done any thing of the kind, they would have been guilty of a fraud upon the persons who, by the process of reduction, were compelled to sacrifice a part of their incomes. He would state to the House one circumstance which would prove that the government had acted bonâ fide in the transaction, and had not been desirous to produce a state of things calculated to assist them in the operation which they proposed. When he stated, at the commencement of 1824, that it was the intention of government to propose the reduction of the 4 per cents, it was suggested, that great facility would be given to the operation—by what?—by reducing the interest on Exchequer-bills. He said, "No, it would be unfair to do that; the reduction of the rate of interest on Exchequer-bills must follow the reduction of interest on all other securities; but it would not be acting with good faith to resort to that measure for the purpose of increasing the disposition of individuals to accept 3½ instead of 4 per cent." He gave that as a practical proof, that government had not been disposed to lend themselves to any measure calculated to effect, by artificial means, that which, in the natural course of events, was not practicable.—The right hon. gentleman said, that he thought it would be very proper to follow the example of 1793; and he had used one expression which, he must confess, rather startled him, and, in his opinion, furnished one of the strongest possible reasons for inducing the House not to adopt that precedent. The right hon. gentleman, in alluding to the proceedings of 1793, spoke of it as being an established practice. Now, if ever it should become the established practice for government to become bankers and pawnbrokers, it would derange all the transactions of commerce, throw every thing into confusion, and teach men not to rely on their own exertions, but to trust to the unnatural and artificial course recommended on the present occasion, and which, if now adopted, would become, not the exception, but the rule for future guidance. He did not think the case of 1793 was so precisely similar to the present as the right hon. gentleman seemed to consider it. Did the right hon. gentleman attribute no importance to the remarkable changes which took place in the whole aspect of affairs on the continent and in this country, between the Summer of 1792 and the Spring of 1793? In the Summer of 1792, the universal impression (which the government not only shared, but tended to produce) was, that if ever there was a period in our history when it was probable that the country would continue for years in a state of peace, that period had then arrived. And yet, what happened? Within a few weeks after that impression prevailed, a war broke out in Europe, under circumstances quite unusual. France acquired an attitude which the wisest men, and Mr. Burke amongst the rest, had thought it incompatible with her situation to assume. In a short time, the situation of France involved this country in hostilities, which, in their nature, exceeded any in which we had ever before been engaged. There was no question that the great prosperity which prevailed at the commencement of 1792 must sooner or later have experienced a revulsion; but, the revulsion was occasioned by an extraneous cause, and not by the extravagant speculations of individuals; and that, therefore, might be said to constitute a case in which it was proper for govern-

ment to interfere. The case of 1811 had also been referred to. Although that case, as to the intensity of the distress, and the particular mode of its operation, might be said to resemble the present, yet the circumstances which had produced the former were as unlike as possible those which had brought about the latter. The distress of 1811 was not occasioned by general speculation and over-trading, though he admitted that it was partly produced by over-trading in one particular branch of commerce, which arose out of the peculiar circumstances of the war. By the anti-commercial decrees of Buonaparte (assisted, it might be, by the retaliatory measures of the English government) all the channels of trade between this country and the continent were effectually dammed up. It was not surprising that, under these circumstances, persons engaged in mercantile speculations should avail themselves too eagerly of the sudden opening of the trade with South America. The distress of 1811, then, resulted from over-trading to South America, occasioned by the peculiar situation of hostilities. The circumstances of that case, therefore, were very different from those of the present, and that diversity of circumstances was with him an additional reason for not following one bad example, and setting another. It was the duty of parliament to abstain from entering a vicious circle, from which they would never escape, until they were entangled in its folds. If it were right to adopt the course recommended on the present occasion, then upon every principle of fair dealing and justice government ought to have done exactly the same thing when the landed interest was in a state of distress. A number of persons thought it desirable to do so upon that occasion. Indeed, a distinct proposition was made to the House, though not adopted, that government should adopt a similar measure to that of 1793. Ministers opposed the proposition; not only on the ground of the difficulty of carrying it into execution, but on principle; yet, in point of fact, the agricultural interest had, at that time, just the same claim to the assistance of the government as could be set up by any part of the community at the present moment. He knew not why, if parliament yielded now, they should not have done the same in the case of agricultural distress. In another case, with regard to Ireland, a similar proposition was made to parliament. It was moved, that government should advance 1,000,000*l.* to be employed in the encouragement of the cultivation of flax and the draining of bogs in Ireland. There could be no doubt that the advance of money would have been immediately beneficial to Ireland, and would have served for a precedent to be brought to bear upon the present argument; but parliament most wisely abstained from establishing it. It could not be said that the distress which existed in Ireland at that period was not equal to that which now prevailed in this country. Ireland had just recovered from a desolating famine, which had swept away thousands of her inhabitants, and covered the land with mourning; all her banking establishments were broken, or in a state of embarrassment, and yet parliament did not think proper to adopt the remedy now proposed, because they considered that it was likely to produce the evil of rendering government liable to be called upon on every occasion of distress to act as bankers and pawnbrokers. To refer to another case. Every body knew that, in 1823, a most important branch of our commerce, namely, the West-India trade, was in a state of great distress. The circumstances of that case, as related at the period, were precisely similar to those of the present time. It was said upon that occasion, that the planters possessed sufficient property to answer all demands; but that, nevertheless, merchants would not advance them any money, because they were not satisfied with the security of the planter's property. And to what was this doubt of the security of the planter's property attributed? Partly to the anomalous state of society in the West-India islands, and partly—he begged the attention of the House to the fact—to the measures adopted by that House on the subject of negro-slavery. The grounds upon which government was then called upon to advance 5,000,000*l.* to assist the West-India interest, were quite as strong as those upon which they were at present urged to advance a similar sum to the commercial interest; but parliament, conceiving that it would be setting a bad example, rejected the proposition. No one could be found to defend the proceedings in question per se. It was admitted that it should be resorted to only in a case of necessity. If there was any one power which it was the duty of government to be cautious in assuming, it was that of advancing money in what

might be considered cases of necessity. The temptations to abuse such a power were so great, that he should not like to be answerable for the consequences which might ensue if parliament should be too facile in admitting the propriety of establishing it. Supposing that government had lent the 4,000,000*l.* which were asked for the relief of the agricultural interest in 1822, the 1,000,000*l.* for Ireland in 1823, the 5,000,000*l.* for the West-India interest, in addition to the 5,000,000*l.* which were now called for, they would have advanced no less than 15,000,000*l.* in the course of four years. Would any body say that such a course of proceeding was not dangerous; and that it was not a misfortune that the original precedent of 1793 existed? It was impossible to confine a measure of the kind under consideration to any particular case. Each case was represented to possess particular claims upon the attention of government and parliament. The best feelings of men's nature were appealed to, in order to induce them to follow the course which had been adopted in 1793, and which, if now resorted to, could never be refused to the application of any particular interest which might conceive itself to be, or might actually be, in a state of suffering.—The right honourable gentleman seemed to think that, in point of principle, there was no difference between the Bank lending money on goods, and the same thing being done by government. Government had not by law the power of lending money upon goods. A special law must therefore be passed in order to give them that power. The Bank, however, already possessed the power; it was coeval with their original institution, and though never exercised, had, on every renewal of their charter, continued to form an inherent part of it. There was, therefore, the greatest distinction between the two cases. The absence of this power on the part of the government was an indication that it was not congenial with their functions, and its possession on the part of the Bank was a proof that, in the opinion of parliament, it might be wise and prudent, under particular circumstances, for that body to exercise it. The exercise of that power by the Bank must, of course, depend on circumstances. It would not be prudent to bring it into action on all occasions, but periods might arrive when it would be highly useful to do so. It never could be supposed that it would be prudent for the Bank to act on all occasions as they did in December last. Their conduct on that occasion was justified only by the circumstances of the period.—With respect to the proposition of an issue of Exchequer-bills by government, supposing government were to adopt that measure, would the Bank have nothing to do with it? Had they nothing to do with the measure of 1793? How would the bills be converted into money? The Bank would cash them. The right hon. gentleman had assumed, that only a small portion of the bills would be carried to the Bank, and that the rest would be cashed in other quarters; but he had no right to make that assumption, any more than that it would be necessary to issue only 1,000,000*l.* out of the 5,000,000*l.* which it was proposed to place at the disposal of ministers. He was bound to look at the measure under the most unfavourable circumstances, and would therefore suppose that the whole amount of Exchequer-bills would be issued. The Bank might be called upon to cash those bills under circumstances which would render it inconsistent with their duty to do so. The Bank, who were necessarily well acquainted with all the variations of exchanges, would contract and extend their issues as circumstances might require. A set of commissioners would not be governed by the same prudential reasons which would influence the Bank, and might issue bills at a moment when the Bank would feel it to be inconsistent with their duty to cash them. If such a case should occur, the mischief would be ten thousand times greater than that which at present prevailed. If these bills were not taken up by somebody, they would add to the already loaded state of the market of Exchequer-bills. He would then like to know how the revenue would feel the excessive issue of these bills, which, when they fell to a discount, might be paid at par into the Treasury, which would then be less able to meet the wants of the country.—The right hon. gentleman had spoken of secrecy, the secrecy which it was incumbent to observe in cases of persons applying for pecuniary accommodation. For his part, he had been somewhat struck with that notion; but upon coming to converse with persons who were willing to receive assistance, he had found none of that excessive delicacy upon which the right hon. gentleman had

expatiated. The language used by every one who applied for assistance was, that every body else was in the same predicament, and the difficulties under which the applicants laboured were never considered by them as affecting their credit or stability. They did not imagine that it reflected any discredit upon them to go to the Bank of England, or any where else, where they could procure money upon an advance on their goods. The language of the applicants was, "We are solvent—it is not mere credit that we want, but something more substantial—we now offer you, not a bill of exchange, or an acceptance to be discounted, but goods of the full value of the money we wish you to advance upon them." He could not for the life of him conceive why persons should be afraid of being known, or require secrecy. They might go with a bold and confident face and ask for advances. Some gentlemen had talked of commissioners being, on a former occasion, bound by an oath of secrecy. Not one word of this was true. They took an oath of office, indeed, but not an oath of secrecy. The commissioners of 1793, who were sixteen in number, consisted (with the exception of lord Sheffield and sir Grey Cooper) of merchants, and three of them were Bank directors. And why were we to assume that Bank directors would avail themselves of their situation, and publish sinister rumours to the prejudice of applicants? How happened it that persons, when distressed, always went to the Bank? The Bank did as they were bound to do, look into the securities offered. Whether the pledges were goods or bills of Exchange, they must be satisfied, by previous inquiry, that they could safely trust to them. The argument as to secrecy, therefore, had no validity whatsoever.—The right hon. gentleman conceived that ministers were bound to take this course of giving relief, because the measures taken at the commencement of the session, of which he was a supporter, had imposed upon them the duty of relieving the evil thereby created. But this proposition had been made to government in December last, previous to the opening of the session, and when Exchequer-bills were at a discount of 85*s.* per cent. They had then thrown cold water upon it, and had acted at first as they had continued to do ever since. Feeling that the mode proposed was objectionable, and likely to lead to dangerous consequences, they set themselves decidedly against so bad an example. Were they, therefore, now to be reproached, because they had endeavoured to discover if any other method of administering relief could be devised, not liable to the same objections? The government had never denied relief in any way in which it could be given. They had a choice between two measures, one liable to insuperable objections, the other to but few objections. It was not, therefore, a matter of reproach to them that they refused the former, and acceded to the latter, which they thought reasonable. The right hon. gentleman complained that they had used no language of a cheering nature. Now, he was apt to think that when government did so, it was vehemently reproached for drawing a highly-coloured picture of the state of things; and if ministers had treated the matter lightly, as if the distress was nothing at all, they would have experienced more censure than the right hon. gentleman had bestowed, and with justice. He never wished to underrate the present difficulties; and one reason for it was, that he wished to show that the greatness of those difficulties resulted from particular evils. It was the duty of ministers to impress upon the House the real causes of the difficulties of the country, and to point out the means of avoiding their recurrence. There was one opinion in which he most cordially concurred with the right hon. gentleman, and that was with respect to the resources of the country. All its sources of wealth, all the springs of its action, notwithstanding this superficial pressure, were in their pristine vigour. Although the leaves and branches of the tree had been shattered, its roots were firmly fixed, and they would shoot forth again with fresh beauty. If we took our measures with prudence and wisdom, he had no doubt we should succeed, and at no distant period, in weathering the storm. Although there had doubtless been so much individual distress in different parts of the country, neither himself nor his colleagues would have to reproach themselves with not having given their best attention to the subject, or with not having proposed those measures which they believed were best calculated to raise this country from the difficulties in which it was placed.

Mr. *Baring* observed, that the question divided itself, in the right hon. gentle-

man's speech, into two parts; first, whether any relief at all should be afforded; and secondly, whether the relief proposed was of the proper kind. With respect to the first branch, the right hon. gentleman had argued that the government should not interfere, and that former precedents and former examples were vicious, and ought not to be followed. It was the general tendency of the argument of the right hon. gentleman, that all precedent and examples had been pernicious. Indeed, the right hon. gentleman had first argued that there existed no precedents whatever, or, if there did, that they were not fit to be followed. With respect to the argument of withholding relief on the ground of the impropriety of government's interfering in the private affairs of individuals, he need scarcely observe, that the principles of the measures of government were a direct and immediate interference in private concerns. The merchants had received refusal after refusal to their applications and proposals to the Treasury; and it was not until the hon. member from under the gallery had taken up this subject, that government thought fit to give way [hear, hear!]. He was only stating the simple fact. The government would not deny that they had had communications with the directors of the Bank, and with merchants. These latter gentlemen had declared to ministers most distinctly, that they wanted nothing whatever for themselves, but could not see their friends and neighbours falling about them in distress and misery. They wanted the government to act upon the precedents which, in their opinion, were exactly suited to the present time. These representations were made to his majesty's ministers; he did not recollect at what period; but, if he stated that they had been made three or four weeks ago, he was not stating it too far. Nevertheless, the government had persisted in withholding relief until the present moment. If ever the old adage, "Bis dat qui citò dat," was applicable to any case, it was applicable to the present. If what had been done now, had been done two or three weeks ago, the country would have been spared a vast mass of its difficulties. The only language of government in reply to such applications was, that their interference in transactions of trade was a bad precedent, and that, therefore, they would do nothing. Such language had been held, up to that very night. Up to that very moment nothing like concession had come from his majesty's ministers. The government now said, that they would give no assistance at all; but they forced the Bank directors to do what that body had pressed the government to excuse them from doing. As men conversant with the principles of business, they thought the present measure would form a precedent most objectionable, with respect to themselves, in their relations with the commercial world. They begged and prayed of government to have recourse to those other precedents which stood on record. On the subject of the non-interference of government upon this occasion, and the inexpediency of citing precedents, and not following them, the right hon. gentleman made out a very bad case. The precedent of affording relief had been acted upon, over and over again, by Mr. Pitt; but the government said, that his precedent ought not to be followed, except in an extraordinary state of affairs. Now, he would ask whether the present distresses did not constitute an extraordinary state of affairs? There were more notes in circulation now than had ever existed on any one of the occasions of government affording relief; and he would ask what was there in the present case which would take it out of that class of precedents to which he referred? If ever a state of distress had been unequivocally produced by the conduct of government, it was the present. It had been argued that government had been justified in affording relief on former occasions, because the distresses which they relieved had been occasioned by their own measures; and such was strictly the case at present. The difficulties under which the country laboured, constituted an extraordinary state of things, which had brought great discredit upon the circulating medium of the country. People possessing an abundance of property, failed in that medium of transactions between man and man, on which they before were able to rely. It was not so much the want of property that occasioned the present distress, as the want of the medium of exchanging and bartering that property. One-fourth of the currency of the country had been put out of circulation. This was the source of infinite distress. What did the parliament do under these circumstances? Certainly what no man could have anticipated. Immediately upon their meeting, they put out the remaining

fourth. Another great source, perhaps the greatest source of difficulty, was a want of confidence in the paper circulation. What did the government do to restore this confidence? They declared that the remaining currency was mere trash. They had already brought in a bill, and the country were watching their measures with anxiety, when, on a sudden, new lights break in upon them, and they alter those measures. This was done in the midst of poignant distress; and yet they said that they could not interfere in the private concerns of individuals, and that no case of interference in the private affairs of individuals had been made out; that all this was mere peevish, pettish, and puerile. The question was not, whether good could be done to this or that individual, but, whether the measure would be beneficial to the country at large. But then the government said, it would be a bad example for them to afford relief. And, to get rid of the example, they imposed the measure upon the Bank of England, where the example was a thousand times worse. His own conviction was, that it was an example rarely to be followed. It had been used unfortunately, upon mere trifling occasions. It was certainly an example more "honoured in the breach than in the observance." If this had been a case of distress in one particular branch of trade, the rest being sound, then the distress might be left to the assistance of individuals. It was only in cases where distress was universal, that the government ought to interfere. It was not to aid a particular class of speculators, but substantial honest traders, numbers of whom might be seen around, who, though unconnected with bubbles, were affected by them; for it was in the nature of things that honest men often suffered from the folly of others. The precedent of 1793 was founded on sound sense and discretion. It extended parental aid where it was needed, and by restoring helping confidence, was calculated to work a great benefit. The House, however, would fail in its duty if it did this on insufficient ground. Within these two or three years there had been issues of Exchequer-bills for public objects, as the papers on the table would show; and it was strange that, whilst there was a glut of money in the country, government issued Exchequer-bills under the Exchequer-bill loan act, and refused to do it now, when money was scarce. The question was, whether the interference of government could be usefully applied? And if ever there was a case of that kind, it was that before the House. No case of distress had ever been more pressing, and here the remedy called for would produce a beneficial effect. What was wanted was the medium of confidence between those who possessed property; and Exchequer-bills afforded just the means of dealing required. The right hon. gentleman had said, that the Exchequer-bills would go to the Bank, and that the Bank would have to buy them. That he totally denied. There never was a time in which there was more capital in the country. He could say that he had now twice as much as at many other periods; and although capitalists would not, from apprehension, advance money on goods, they would do it on bills. There was a complaint of a want of circulating medium; yet there were more Bank-notes and more gold in the country at present than there had been for some time past. But there prevailed a panic amongst capitalists, as to the effect of the measures of government, which made men who possessed money take care of themselves. The right hon. gentleman was wrong in saying that Exchequer-bills would do no service. It was precisely this sort of relief which was wanted. The right hon. gentleman first said he disapproved of the plan altogether; then he sent the applicants to the Bank, who were reluctant, and at first refused, though they subsequently consented to compound. It was, nevertheless, a power which the Bank was improperly intrusted with. He was aware that, in the present state of the foreign exchanges, the Bank might give themselves what latitude they pleased; yet a season of danger might occur. With respect to the legal authority of the Bank to advance money on goods, he had been some years a director of the Bank, and knew something of their concerns; and though he had read over their charter, he did not think that they were empowered to lend money on this species of security. He thought no person could read it over and maintain that it was ever intended to give that power: it was merely a provision against the possibility of their taking goods for a doubtful debt, in order that they might have the power of sale. He was confident that the Bank solicitor would tell them so, and that it never was intended that they should be allowed to lend money on goods. It was in his opi-

nion a most dangerous precedent. The right hon. gentleman thought he did good by establishing sound precedents. He was departing from his principle, and doing great injury by the present precedent, in holding it to be dangerous for the government to do what they intrusted to the Bank. If this measure had been, however acted upon before, it might have produced great benefit, and prevented much of that general disgrace which had brought many persons into the mire. He could not help declaring, that through the whole of these proceedings, the merchants had been held at arms-length by his majesty's ministers—communion and assistance both refused to them—in a manner that was perfectly unprecedented in the history of the country.—As regarded that part of the plan which would touch upon the law of Merchant and Factor, he doubted the expediency, too, of putting forward the operation of the new bill. The new law, as the House would be aware, entitled the holder of goods to pledge them; making the possession the evidence of title. This was not the case with the old law, under which a holder of goods might take up money upon them; and yet a third person, proving himself the owner, might take them back (without repayment), provided no actual sale had taken place. Now, the lord chancellor, with his usual dislike to novelties, had only suffered this bill—of which he (Mr. B.) entirely approved—to pass, subject to a provision, that the world should have notice of the change in their situation; and for that purpose, that the foreign merchant might have notice that his consignee in future could pledge the goods intrusted him. The bill was therefore not allowed to come into operation until October next. Now, this was at least an honest provision, if it led to delay; and although he would have originally passed the bill to operate instanter, he did not like, after the time of warning had been published, to run the chance of misleading people by shortening it. Nor was it at all necessary, in fact, practically to do this. When Exchequer-bills, on a former case of emergency similar to the present, had been issued, no doubt some oath had been required from those who deposited, as to their real ownership of the property pledged; but not a shilling on that occasion had been lost, and it would be better in the same way, now to take the hazard. With reference, however, to the point of secrecy, which was a point of the highest importance, the commissioners of 1793 stated in their report that, in many cases, the information which came before them was such as to lay open the private affairs of most respectable individuals. On this account they had taken the precaution, before their duties concluded, that every paper connected with the business which they had been transacting should be destroyed. Now, on this very showing, he should decidedly have preferred another parliamentary commission. The Bank directors were, no doubt, men of the strictest honour; but then they were just the very men whom these borrowers would most likely be in constant mercantile communication with, at the time when they wanted this assistance; and the very last, therefore, whom they would choose to trust with their distresses. Though the mercantile world had little to thank government for, however, in the present measure, he was glad to find that something would be done. For what they did get, they were no doubt greatly indebted to the perseverance of the hon. member for the city of London. At the same time, he must repeat that ministers had hung back from the mercantile interest in a way which would not be forgotten. The value of the boon was much diminished by the way in which it had been granted. And the assistance, after all, such as it was, was given in the shape of all others the most inconvenient.

Lord *Althorp* said, that he did not wish to look for cases of precedent. It was admitted that this was a period of great commercial distress, and the question was, whether ministers would or would not step forward to relieve the trade and commerce of the country? He fully concurred with them in the necessity of placing the currency upon a permanent footing, and he thought that the present was a favourable moment for doing so, but concurrently with that measure, they were bound to take every means to relieve the existing distress. It was true the Bank of England had, by its charter, the power to lend money upon goods, but it was a power rarely used, and ministers had no right to depend upon the exertions of the Bank in the present emergency. Nor did he see, when an issue of Exchequer-bills on former occasions had been attended with complete success, why the present assistance should have been given in a shape, the conve-

nience of which was at least problematical.

Mr. *T. Wilson* thought, that ministers were bound, in mere courtesy to parliament, to assign some reason beyond their personal pleasure, why the plan now under discussion was preferred to that which had been recommended to them. For the measure which had been suggested there was at least a precedent; and he still believed that it would have turned out the most advantageous, as well as the most satisfactory to the country. It was said that there could be no difference between borrowing money upon bills of exchange and borrowing it upon goods, especially as the time for which the accommodation was wanted would not exceed a few months; but he doubted very much whether any man of business could be found who would declare, that he thought any such limited extent of accommodation likely to be sufficient. Gentlemen coming up on the spur from the country, and applying to the Bank for relief, might be glad to take it for any period, and on any terms they could get; and such persons might have talked of a few months being sufficient; but certainly no one else could. As to what was said to justify the dislike of ministers now to assist the mercantile interests; namely, that relief had been refused some years since to the distress of the agriculturists—that argument had no force whatever; for the relief to the agriculturalists, though nominally refused, was virtually granted. It was true, that advances were not made by the government: but a measure was passed, empowering the country banks to issue small notes, which had exactly the same operation. As it seemed to him, the precedent of allowing merchants to go to the Bank to borrow money upon goods, was likely to lead to a repetition of such applications, in such a way as would be highly inconvenient. Merchants would go to the Bank, when the custom was once established, upon every occasion which might seem to justify such a measure; whereas, they could not have the face to make application to government, unless in a case of great general national distress. He could not sit down, without protesting against the tone in which ministers had treated both the applicants for relief, and parliament in general. In a case of public calamity, like that in which the country had been placed, as servants of the Crown, and standing immediately between the sufferers and parliament, they might have shown more judgment in listening patiently even to the weakest of the various propositions brought before them, than by declaring, highly and hastily as they had done, that if the House adopted any measure but that to which they inclined, it might seek for some other persons to carry that measure into execution. Decidedly, he thought that ministers would have done well to have been less positive; and that they had treated the mercantile interest of the country with a levity which the distress under which it laboured did not warrant.

Mr. *Attwood* condemned the hesitation of government to afford relief at a moment when the whole manufacturing and commercial interests of the country were in one common state of stagnation and distress. And, in this state of things, what was it that they required? They asked no boon. They only asked that the channels of public communication might be restored; that the stagnation which at present prevailed might be relieved by an issue of Exchequer-bills. And this aid they requested at a period of as great distress and panic as any which had ever taken place in this country. What danger could there be in advancing Exchequer-bills? It had been formerly tried, and found to answer all the purposes expected. He hoped the ministers would not, at a future period, turn round upon the Bank, and accuse them of any inconvenience that might arise from the measure which they were now forcing upon that body. The right hon. Secretary had acted, he contended, in total ignorance of the subject, when he said, in 1819, that the measure of that year was to settle the currency question for ever. A metallic currency, with a standard of 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* per ounce of gold, could never be established in this country along with our national debt, and our enormously expensive establishments. It would be found impossible to reconcile the ancient standard of this country with the existing state of things. They were altogether incompatible. It was very well for the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs to condemn the conduct of Mr. Pitt, with reference to the Bank restriction, and to talk of his illumination at one time, and his total eclipse at another. Such restrictions would come when they would. When the Bank coffers were empty, even the right hon. Secretary would find himself obliged

to overshadow the brilliancy of his career by a restriction act, and so have his moments of obscuration as well as Mr. Pitt. He knew of no more likely mode of bringing about such a condition of things than the present measure of forcing the Bank to make loans on the deposit of goods. It was impossible that relief could be given in gold, with the standard fixed at 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* At that rate, the restoration of the metallic currency would cause fluctuations more violent, and bring on ruin more complete, than the wildest freaks of the paper money had ever produced. The necessity of the Bank to pay in gold with a standard of 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* had caused the reduction in the issue of their notes; and thus was laid the foundation of that want of confidence, which had occasioned so much mischief, and would continue to do so until relief was effectually given. Had the standard price of gold been fixed at 4*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* per ounce, there would have been no panic, and no reduction of the number of notes. Distress and alarm, he was convinced, would go much further, unless some better measures of relief were resorted to.

Mr. *W. Whitmore* said, he believed that a fair arrangement of the currency of the country would do far more for the general benefit than the measure now proposed; but as relief was to be given, he thought it would be much better given by advances from the Bank than by an issue of Exchequer-bills. With reference to the conduct of ministers, the hon. member for London found fault with their steady adherence to the line which they had adopted; but he could not see the subject in that light. He gave them credit for their steadiness, and thought that nothing but mischief could have resulted from vacillation. He could not concur in opinion with those who wished ministers to abandon the position they had taken. They ought not to be such mere creatures of circumstances as to veer round with every breath of popular opinion. Let them steadily pursue the line of conduct which they had pledged themselves to support, the difficulties which were now complained of would speedily pass away. Nothing which he had heard ought to deter government from pursuing that sound line of policy which they had declared it to be their determination to uphold. With respect to what had fallen from the hon. member for Callington, he implored the House not to be led away by the reasoning of that hon. gentleman. That hon. gentleman had advocated a theory, which, if acted upon, could only lead to national bankruptcy. The hon. gentleman had proposed to the House a measure that would distinctly and decidedly occasion an entire want of credit and confidence in the country. The adoption of such a proposition would be a complete aberration from those pledges which the country was bound to abide by—it would, in fact, be nothing less than an act of bankruptcy [hear]. When the hon. member talked of different prices of gold; when he spoke of the market price being upwards of 4*l.* when the Mint price was only 3*l.* 10*s.* 7½*d.* it was not difficult to see at what he was pointing. He would ask gentlemen to inquire, and to inquire seriously, whether the country was in a situation which would require ministers to follow the course evidently indicated by the hon. member? If the country were in such a situation—if it were so circumstanced as to justify the adoption of a measure similar to that which the hon. member seemed to approve of—let it be brought boldly and fairly before the public—let no covert attempt be made to undermine that public honour and hitherto unblemished credit, of which that House was the legitimate protector. He wished the House to consider, whether, in the present state of the country, when much distress and confusion prevailed amongst all classes of society, it would be wise or prudent to adopt any proposition which could have the effect of impairing, in the slightest degree, that credit, on the faith and security of which business had heretofore been successfully conducted? He implored gentlemen to weigh well the probable effect of the votes which they meant to give on the momentous subjects that had been brought under their consideration. He had no connexion with ministers, and most probably never should have any connexion with them; therefore he must at least be supposed to speak disinterestedly. In his opinion the measures which they appeared anxious to pursue were calculated to improve the resources of the country. Those measures would lead to a just and proper development of our means, and would, if fairly followed up, produce the greatest possible benefit to the empire, by bringing back its resources to their former high state of prosperity. Impressed with these sentiments, he called

on the House and the country not lightly to withdraw from ministers that confidence which had hitherto been so generally and so justly bestowed on them. He trusted that gentlemen would still continue to grant that support to ministers, by which alone they could hope to carry into effect those comprehensive measures which, he was convinced, would in the end produce the most excellent results.

Mr. *Attwood*, in explanation, observed, that the sentiments which had fallen from him would not bear, if fairly examined, the construction which the hon. member had been pleased to put upon them.

Mr. *P. Moore* said, it was admitted on all hands, that the country was in a state of great distress; and the question was, whether that distress was or was not to be relieved by the legislature? Unquestionably relief ought to be afforded; and it was their duty to consider what measure appeared most likely to produce an object so desirable. Various reasons were adduced for the existence of the present untoward state of things. Amongst other things, they were told that 25,000,000*l*. of money had been sent out of the country on foreign speculations. That was all fabulous. The 25,000,000*l*. were still in the country, would be in the country, and could not get out of the country. Much of the present mischief had arisen from the system which had been pursued, of pointing out one speculation as good, and decrying another as bad, without possessing a knowledge on the subject; thus inflicting injury on one set of people, and heaping benefits on another, without duly considering the merits of any one case. That cursed, that abominable thing called a hoax—(and he was sorry to say that such things were going forward every hour)—had contributed in an immense degree to produce the present unfortunate state of affairs. Many proofs of this were to be found in the public papers. He had examined the subject deeply. He understood it well. He felt severely from the system of calumny, of vice, and of falsehood, which prevailed on the Stock-exchange. They stopped at nothing that appeared likely to forward the execution of their plans. That place was a Pandemonium of falsehoods, of infamous falsehoods, ready to overbear the government in all its proceedings, and to thwart every transaction amongst honest, upright, and virtuous men [a laugh]. He spoke from unhappy experience. He knew it but too well. He had suffered by it, and so had some of his honourable friends. Doubtless some body gained by them. The Stock-exchange, he repeated, was neither more nor less than a Pandemonium. The object of its frequenters was, to constitute an imperium in imperio, and undermine the measures of government. Ministers might do as they pleased; but if they did not look about them, the jobbers would blow them up [a laugh]. It was not his way to exaggerate. He spoke from personal and private knowledge, when he said he knew where to find, at a moment's warning, one of your domestic brokers, sitting snug behind his desk, who could soon initiate a man in the depths and difficulties of this Pandemonium. Aye, and his hon. friends about him knew where to find him too [a laugh]. He spoke, in his previous description, exclusively of those brokers who possessed what was called the privilege of the Stock-exchange. A man must be known to have been connected with certain transactions, before he was eligible to be admitted there. If he obtruded himself an honest guest, he was hooted out, drummed out, thumped out, aye and kicked out. In short, it was a complete field for gambling. Something of this kind —gambling on an extensive scale—was attempted at the west-end of the town, but the worthy magistrates of Bow-street soon put an end to it. They had all the parties up, and the wholesome discipline of the tread-mill wrought an effectual cure. His hon. friend, alderman Wood, and the other city magistrates were, he thought, rather tardy in not interfering with the nuisance he had mentioned; but "let them," said Mr. Peter Moore, "make me lord-mayor for once in my life, and I'll soon have them up, and get rid of them all in four-and-twenty hours." The lord-mayor and court of aldermen grossly neglected their duty if they did not put down this sink of lies and vice—this arena for gambling of the worst kind. With much propriety the police officers had been set effectually to work against the hells of Pall-mall, and it would be just as easy to extinguish the great hell of the city. This was his remedy for existing evils; and when once this great object was effected, there would be an end of the distress and want of confidence, the removal of which now puzzled both branches of the legislature. He agreed that distresses ought to be relieved; but

above all he repeated what he had said on a former occasion—"Oh, whatever you do, spare the people, and protect their employment."

Mr. *Ellice* said, in reply, that the present state of things was entirely owing to the plans of ministers. In 1822, a large issue of paper was allowed to meet the agricultural distress. Government was then enabled to reduce the interest on the 5 per cents. There appeared to be plenty of money in the country; individuals wished to procure a higher rate of interest than the funds provided, and they had, in consequence, had recourse to speculation. Instead of encouraging a large issue of paper now, he thought it would be better to grant relief to the country through the medium of Exchequer-bills. If the circulating medium were greatly increased, what would be the effect? A great rise in prices, which would decrease as the circulating medium was narrowed. And in what a situation would the country be then placed? He had hoped that the present conjuncture would have produced some wholesome disagreement between the government and the Bank; and he was sorry that the Bank had not forced the government to abandon their present course. If the Bank had remained firm, government must have yielded the point, and the distress of the country would have given birth to other measures. He regretted very much that the Bank had become instrumental to the adoption of mere half-measures. The proper way to meet the existing distress would have been by an issue of Exchequer-bills.

The motion was agreed to.

PROMISSORY NOTES BILL.] On the order of the day for bringing up the report of this bill,

Mr. *J. Smith* said, he must repeat what he had before said, that the government by bringing this subject before the country as they had done, had created much danger, which they might have avoided by adopting the more prudent course of previous consideration and sedulous inquiry. The evil was said, in the first instance, to have arisen from the speculation which the issues of the private bankers were alleged to have encouraged; and the existing, as well as the apprehended mischief, was now traced to the circumstance of the country bankers paying off their notes, and thus narrowing the circulating medium. One hon. member, not content with what the country bankers were doing, and what they were compelled to do, was desirous that they should be made to pay their notes in a week; without considering, however solvent they might be, whether the Bank of England would be able in so short a space to supply the demand for specie. He considered the attacks that had been made on the country banks, generally, as unfair and unworthy. After all that had been said of them, he would contend that the country bankers had done much good. He should like to know which of his majesty's ministers it was, who wrote the letter addressed to the directors of the Bank, which had been the subject of so much observation. He knew not who wrote it; but this he would state, that it contained internal evidence, that it was not written by the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs. They had recently seen documents drawn up by the right hon. gentleman; and he defied any individual to point out the least affinity between the style of those documents and that in which this letter was couched. He might say further, that it was not the letter of the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Board of Trade; nor of any of the right hon. gentlemen opposite. Instead of entering into this correspondence, ministers should have brought the question before a committee in a quiet and unostentatious manner. Had they done this, wise and timely measures would have been adopted, and much mischief would have been prevented. He thought the proposition for obliging every country banker to make his notes payable at the place where they were issued, was a good one; but he believed that was pretty generally the case at present. His hon. friend (Mr. Attwood) had mentioned some districts, in which he described a different system to be prevalent. The notes issued in those districts, as he stated, were only payable in London. Now, he must say, that in the districts mentioned, he was not acquainted with any banker who pursued that course. If any such instance existed, he should rejoice to see it put an end to. He was afraid that in adopting the measures now under consideration, the government was acting too hastily. The proper mode of legislating on this subject would have been by the appointment of a committee. Parliament would then have been enabled to come forward with a measure almost, if not entirely, free from objection.

Mr. *Attwood* said, that the system which he had described prevailed in Wolverhampton, Stratford-upon-Avon, and other places.

Mr. Alderman *Heygate* said, he had been represented as having asserted, that the country bankers were perfectly satisfied with this measure. He had stated no such thing. What he had said was, that the country bankers did not wish to throw obstacles in the way of ministers; and that they had done all in their power to arrest the growing distress. The cause of the diminution of their circulation was, the general panic which existed. Being pressed, in consequence of that panic, they wished rather to act at once, than wait for the expiration of three years.

Mr. *F. Palmer* rose to express his strong disapprobation of the measure before the House. It was, in his mind, ill-timed, injudicious, and likely to bring most serious distress on the country. In 1822, a great issue of paper took place to meet the distresses of the agricultural interest. They were then said to go on well for a while; but, what was the country better for it now? At length the present misfortunes arose; and now fresh issues of paper-money were resorted to as a remedy. Arguing from the past, would not the state of the country, at a future period, and that not far distant, be just as deplorable as it was at present? The bill, he contended, was no remedy for the evil.—It was merely a palliative; and when its effects had passed away, the patient would find himself worse than he was before. If the expenses of the country were not considerably reduced, there could be no safe return to a metallic currency. To attempt one without the other, would bring upon agriculture the severest distress; and then they must come to an amicable, or equitable adjustment—he did not care which term they chose for the purpose. He declared himself no friend to high prices. He knew that the manufacturing interests could not exist with high prices; much less could any natural competition be successful under them. But he knew, also, that if corn were not kept up to a certain price, starvation must ensue amongst the agricultural classes. Ministers had a really difficult task to perform. He believed they were earnest in their endeavours to do right. But here was their difficulty—they must have low prices for the manufacturers, and they must have high prices for the other classes. But, under these circumstances, they were not justified in the unbounded extravagance of the expenditure. If the difficulty was to be met, it could only be by the most rigid economy. The interest of the debt, and the expenses of government, could not be paid at their present grievous amount in a circulation of increased value. Notwithstanding these things, ministers went on with their expenditure. One specimen of their estimates had been brought forward, and the House had seen with surprise that it was greater than it was last year. Two other specimens would be produced in a few nights, and, if he was not greatly mistaken, they also would be on an increased scale of expense. There was another point to which he wished to call the attention of the House, and that was the present mode of paying the public creditor. The money had been lent to the government in one species of currency, and it was now repaid in another; by which the payment was greatly increased beyond the amount of the original loan. Now he was of opinion, that, with respect to this matter, some adjustment ought to be made, and that the public creditor ought to receive his claim, if not in the same currency, at least on a calculation adjusted by the same currency. As the matter at present stood, this was not the case; for the public creditor had advanced his money when the guinea was worth 28*s*. and his claim was paid at the same nominal rate, when the guinea had been restored to its old standard of 21*s*. He had said so much merely in discharge of his duty.

The report being brought up,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that there were some alterations which it was of importance should be made in this bill. The first of these was to expunge from the penalty-clauses that which empowered a justice of the peace summarily to levy the penalty inflicted by the act. His proposition was, that instead of this the penalties should be levied in the ordinary way, as in other cases of offences against the Stamp-acts. The other alteration was, that individuals should not be precluded from drawing checks upon their bankers for sums less than 5*l*.

Sir *M. W. Ridley* said, that some persons had an idea in the north, that no one-pound notes of any description were to remain in circulation after the passing of the bill. If the right hon. gentleman would give that notion a positive contra-

diction, it would prevent any further misunderstanding upon a subject of much importance.'

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the object of the bill was the extinction of small notes at the end of three years. But, in his opinion, that extinction should be brought about within three years by as slow degrees as were practicable. If any persons had acted under the idea that small notes were immediately to go out of circulation, they had assuredly laboured under a complete misapprehension.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* expressed a doubt whether, according to the present wording of the clause, any drafts for sums under five pound were not illegal, if they were drawn payable to order and not to bearer.

The *Attorney-General* said, that the act of the 17th Geo. 3rd had been brought in to prevent the circulation of one-pound promissory notes, and parliament had thought fit to extend the operation of it to all notes under five pound. The object then in view was, to prevent small bills being given at long dates; which otherwise might have passed and circulated from hand to hand, as the small notes payable on demand had before done. The act, consequently, allowed bills to be drawn on bona fide debtors, at twenty-one days' date, in a certain form contained in the act.

The proposed amendments were then agreed to.

Mr. *Denman* hoped, that instead of going to the third reading of the bill, the right hon. gentleman would allow it to be reprinted. He objected to it wholly, as a most impolitic interference with the principles of free trade, which the right hon. gentlemen had so honourably supported. This bill was of no effect. The last clause repealed it as to the Bank of England which was still permitted to issue one and two pound notes; a liberty which he did not think could be granted to them with greater propriety than to other banks. As, however, that liberty was reserved to them, he trusted that the Attorney-general would be directed to bring in a bill to mitigate the punishment of forgery, so as to prevent the recurrence of those horrid executions which were produced by the ease with which Bank of England notes might be forged.

The bill as amended was ordered to be printed, and read a third time on Thursday.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, March 1.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.] After numerous petitions had been presented, praying for the Abolition of Slavery,

Mr. *Fowell Buxton* rose, pursuant to notice, to present a petition from the inhabitants of London, for the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies. It was, he said, more numerously signed than any petition that had ever before been presented to the House; the number of signatures being no less than 72,000. Following the petitions already presented that evening from many other populous and enlightened places, it proved beyond all doubt, the great and lively interest taken by the public with regard to this question. He should therefore avail himself of this opportunity, to ask the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, what was the course his majesty's government intended to pursue, as to the amelioration of the condition of the slave population in the colonies? He would not enter into the general argument of the question but he would state the precise position in which, at this moment, it stood. In 1823, his majesty's government said, that it was a question of such vast importance, and of such extreme delicacy, that they desired to have it placed in their hands. Those by whom it had been brought forward consented to the proposition, and it was accordingly transferred to the care of government. On that occasion the right hon. gentleman stated his opinions very fully regarding the general question of slavery; and, having since attentively and deliberately considered the right hon. gentleman's speech, he could find no material distinction between his views and those of the original promoters of the discussion. The right hon. gentleman was far from attempting to justify the existence of slavery, as a desirable or even tolerable state of society; and he had admitted, that the principles of the Christian religion, and the spirit of the British constitution, were equally favourable to the extension of freedom to all who lived under their influence and protection. The right hon. gentleman was a decided advocate of the gradual extinction of what he treated as an unquestionable evil. He would not trouble the House by reading at length the Resolutions with which the right hon. gentleman, on that occasion, concluded his speech. It was enough to say, that

their purport was clearly to pledge the House to an amelioration of slavery so effectual, as to lead to a participation, on the part of the negroes, in all those civil rights and privileges which the rest of the king's subjects enjoyed; in other words, to the final and complete abolition of slavery. In pursuance of these Resolutions, his majesty's government had framed an Order in Council, which they intended to bring into operation in those colonies which were immediately under the authority of the Crown, and to recommend it to the colonies having legislatures of their own, as the basis of their legislation for the slave population. That Order in Council, though defective in some material respects, certainly contained many excellent regulations. It provided, that negro evidence should, under certain restrictions, be admissible in the courts of law; the marriages of the slaves were legalized; the obstacles in the way of manumission were removed; the use of the whip, as the badge of authority and the stimulus to labour, was prohibited, and, as regarded the punishment of females, entirely abolished; provision was made for eventually putting an end to the practice of Sunday markets, and Sunday labour; the property of the negro was protected; and he was empowered to apply the property he might possess in purchasing either his own redemption or that of his immediate relations. On the discussion in 1823, to which he had referred, all parties seemed to be agreed in principle. The only question was, how could the new system be brought, in the soonest and safest manner, into practice? No doubt was expressed by the hon. gentleman connected with the West-India interest as to the cordial co-operation of the colonial assemblies. The right hon. gentleman, however, foreseeing, as it now appeared, the true nature of the obstructions to be apprehended, had declared that, if his majesty's government encountered any opposition partaking of the nature of contumacy, he would call on parliament to perform its duty towards the negroes, and exercise its power to compel the amelioration of their condition. The principles on which that amelioration was to proceed, were laid down in the Order in Council. Nothing could be more unequivocal than what was required from the West-India colonists; nor could any thing be more unequivocal than the utter refusal, on their part, to carry into execution the proposed measures for the benefit of their slaves. He was anxious to avoid the excitement of feeling; and he would, therefore, only state the bare facts of the case. Generally, speaking, he might say that very little indeed had been done. In Tobago, the legislature had certainly done something. They had altered the law of evidence, so as to admit the evidence of slaves against free persons in cases of murder and mayhem alone, and that under rigid restrictions; they had changed the market day from Sunday to Thursday; they had reduced the discretionary power of the master from thirty-nine to twenty lashes; they had enlarged the number of days allowed the slaves for their own grounds; and they had protected the slaves' property. In the Bahamas, they had partially legalized marriage, and forbidden the separation of families by judicial sale. In Barbadoes they had partially admitted the evidence of slaves against free persons. These, he believed, were all the improvements which had taken place. But even these scanty concessions had been accompanied with the re-enactment of the worst features of the old system. His majesty's government, therefore, were obliged to withhold their assent from even the acts which contained these partial amendments. To this extent the colonists had carried their attempts to ameliorate the condition of their slaves. The House would see, by the contrast, how little they had attempted. They had not abolished the driving system, or the flogging of females. They had not regulated the use of the whip, except in the instances mentioned, or mitigated the arbitrary power of the master, or legalized the marriages of the negroes, or protected their property, or prevented them from being sold separately from their families. They had not in any case given to the slave the power of redeeming himself. In Jamaica, two very insignificant acts had been passed, which were calculated to give some incidental advantages to the negro, though, undoubtedly, the positive and direct advantages belonged wholly to the master. Nothing else had been done in that colony, nor, as far as he knew, in any of the other colonies, having local legislatures, to carry into effect the recorded wishes of the House. The conclusion he drew from all this was, that it was only within the walls of that House, that they

could expect to see any measures enacted tending to the abolition of slavery. The fact was manifest, that either the House must renounce their pledge to the public in behalf of the negro, or at once take the question into their own hands. He was anxious to say nothing that could give offence to any party; but it was his duty broadly to declare his deliberate and confirmed conviction, that the House must do the work themselves, or suffer it to be altogether abandoned. He would conclude by reading an extract from a speech of the right hon. Secretary, which far more eloquently explained his sentiments on the subject than he could himself state them. The eloquence of the passage, however, was its least praise. The prophetic spirit by which it was dictated, entitled it particularly to the attention of the House, who would find that every apprehension expressed in it had unfortunately been realized—"Trust not," said the right hon. gentleman, "the masters of slaves in what concerns legislation for slavery! However specious their laws may appear, depend upon it they must be ineffectual in their application. It is in the nature of things that they should be so. Let, then, the British House of Commons, do their part themselves. Let them not delegate the trust of doing it to those who cannot execute that trust fairly. Let the evil be remedied by an assembly of freemen, by the government of a free people, and not by the masters of slaves."

The Petition was then brought up, and ordered to be read; and, upon the clerk proceeding to read it short, Mr. Buxton intimated that it was the express wish of the petitioners that it should be read at length. Several members called out "short;" but, upon Mr. Canning's stating that he should wish the request of the petitioners in this respect to be complied with, the whole of the petition was read by the clerk. It set forth,

"That the petitioners, while they express their sincere and grateful approbation of the resolutions adopted by the House on the subject of Colonial Slavery, and of the efforts which have since been made by his majesty's ministers to carry them into effect, lament that these efforts should have been almost wholly frustrated by the determined opposition of the colonial authorities to the united wishes of the government, the parliament, and the people of this country; that the petitioners have learned with deep regret from the official documents which have been laid on the table of the House, that the colonial legislatures have either treated the recorded wishes of parliament, and the recommendations and remonstrances of his majesty's government, with neglect, or have met them with the most determined opposition; that the alleged ameliorations of their slave codes manifest the same substantial disregard of the sacred principles of justice which characterized their old enactments; that the existing laws, which, in their practical operation, evidently afford no effectual protection to the slaves, have been made, as the petitioners conceived, on not a few recent occasions, an instrument of the most grievous injustice, cruelty, and oppression, and that the general treatment of the slave population continues to exhibit the same harsh and disgusting effects of the domestic despotism prevailing in the colonies, which first excited the indignant feelings of the British public, and which now call for universal commiseration and immediate relief; that it appears to the petitioners that this unjust and immoral system, as it exists in the British colonies, derives at this moment great support from those commercial regulations, which, by means of bounties and protecting duties in favour of the produce of slave labour, not only materially enhance its price to the British consumer, but augment the miseries of the slaves, and render their liberation more difficult; that, should the petitioners be called upon by the House to contribute for the purpose of extinguishing slavery, at least as large a sum as they now pay for its support, they will cheerfully obey the call; but that they entertain the most insuperable objections to the continuance of the existing restrictions on the commerce of the country in favour of slave-grown produce, because while those restrictions violate the recognized principles of sound commercial policy, and impose on the nation a heavy pecuniary burthen for the maintenance of slavery, they tend to counteract the hope of its reformation, they even serve to aggravate and perpetuate its evils, and they involve the people of this country still more deeply in the guilt of upholding it: that on all these grounds the petitioners humbly but earnestly implore the House to take the premises into their early consideration, and to adopt such measures as to the wisdom of the House shall seem meet

for effecting the great work of colonial reformation and, in accordance with the resolutions of the House, and with the wishes and prayers of the nation at large, for bringing the state of slavery itself to the earliest safe and practicable termination in every part of his majesty's dominions."

On the motion, that it do lie on the table.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* rose, and commenced his speech by observing, that before he answered the call of the hon. member, he had been anxious that the petition should be read, in hopes that he should be able to concur with the sentiments contained in it, and he must admit that it appeared to him to be most unexceptionable, and to be stated with great propriety and moderation. He must also, before he replied to the question of the hon. gentleman, request the clerk to read the resolutions of the 15th of May, 1823.

The resolutions were accordingly read by the clerk, as follows:—

"Resolved, nem. con. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the slave population in his majesty's colonies:

"That, through a determined and persevering, but at the same time judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the slave population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his majesty's subjects:

"That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property."

Mr. Secretary *Canning* then proceeded to state, that he was anxious to have the resolutions read, because as it had been stated, that a system of slavery was totally incompatible with the British constitution and the spirit of the Christian religion, he was desirous that it should be clearly understood in what degree he differed from this proposition; for if this doctrine were to be admitted to its full extent, the obvious inference would be, that slavery must not be permitted to exist one moment longer; all discretion as to the mode or time of suppressing it must be taken out of the hands of parliament, who would be imperiously called upon at once to put it down as an intolerable nuisance. Unquestionably, the spirit of the Christian religion had, in the course of ages, very considerably mollified and ameliorated the condition of slavery; but Christianity had existed in several countries where slavery had prevailed, and the influence of this religion had operated much too slowly in the removal of slavery, to sanction the idea that there was any such incompatibility between the two as had been suggested; and the same answer might be given to the assertion, that a system of slavery was wholly inconsistent with the principles of the British constitution. If this were true to its full extent, how did it happen that the freest parliament of the freest country in the world had, in part at least of the dominions of the Crown, not merely tolerated, but recognized the maintenance of this system? No doubt it was desirable that this unhappy condition should be immediately ameliorated, and, as soon as it could prudently be effected, totally abrogated. The difference between his views on this subject, and those of the hon. member was this:—the hon. member would allow no pause, no modification; he would have the whole system swept away at once: whereas he himself, although he much lamented the part which the colonies had acted with regard to these measures, did not think that the moment had yet arrived for adopting so hasty and precipitate a course of proceeding. He would not, however, deny but that, from the spirit which the colonies had already displayed on this subject, it was more than probable that the time might arrive when it would be necessary for that House to interfere more directly; but as he saw that such an interference would be pregnant with evils both to this country and to the colonies, he was loth to have recourse to it as long as there was any possibility that it might be avoided. He was anxious that the House should not imagine it was pledged by the resolutions of 1823, to a greater extent than was really the case. Those resolutions only recommended a cautious, prudent, and gradual abolition of slavery: why, then, should the House be accused of a departure from them, because it refused to sanction an attempt to effect this object by a rash and pre-

cipitate proceeding? If the principle deducible from these resolutions were to be the test by which the conduct of the government was to be judged, he had little fear of being able to satisfy the House that ministers had been guilty of no dereliction of their duty in this respect. In the month of May, 1823, they had transmitted to the several colonies in the West Indies, copies of the resolutions of that House, with urgent exhortations to act upon them. It was hoped that this would have the desired effect; but, unfortunately, the expectations of the government were disappointed in this respect. This disappointment induced ministers, in 1824, to have recourse to the expedient of embodying these resolutions in an order of council, and transmitting them in that form to the colonies. He must, however, confess, that this expedient had not as yet had the effect which was expected from it; but should it continue to be ineffectual, and should there appear to be no probability that the opposition which it met with from the colonial legislatures would be withdrawn, the executive government would not hesitate coming down to parliament for its assistance in overcoming this obstinate resistance.

The right hon. Secretary said, he would now offer a few words as to the regulations which had been pointed out by the Order in Council. The one sent to Trinidad was, he believed, the most full, and it provided for the admission of the evidence of negroes, the legalization of marriages amongst them, the abolition of Sunday markets, the abolition of the punishment of the whip, the total abolition of corporal punishment with regard to females, that negroes should not be sold apart from their families, that manumission should be rendered more easy, that the property of the negroes should be secured to them, that they should receive religious instruction, and that Saving-banks should be established. Copies of the Order in Council upon these points had been transmitted to the colonial legislatures of Demerara, Berbice, Jamaica, Barbadoes, Bermudas, Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Tobago, St. Vincent's, St. Kitt's, and St. Lucia. In the island of Mauritius, which stood to this country in a similar relation with Trinidad, the regulations had been enforced by the publication of the order; but the twelve colonies, whose names he had just mentioned had, legislatures of their own, or at least constituted organs, through which they made known the expression of their will. By the latest accounts which had been received from those colonies, he found that of the clause relative to religious instruction, modified more or less by the circumstances in which each of them was placed, eight out of the twelve had taken cognizance. With regard to the clause respecting the admission of negro-evidence in cases where whites were concerned, he found that seven out of the twelve either admitted such evidence before, or had agreed to admit it now. With respect to marriage, he was sorry to say that there were only five of them in which any thing had been done in consequence of the recommendation of parliament. As to the security of property, he had to inform the House, that, under certain limitations and modifications, eight of them had taken cognizance of that clause, or had rendered the property of negroes secure before. With respect to the manumission of slaves, he found that the greater part of the colonies had legislated on the point before the arrival of the order in council among them. The clause prohibiting the sale of slaves of the same family in separate lots, had been adopted by only four colonies; but he was happy to state, that the objections which had been urged against it, were in all the colonies rather of a legal than of a moral nature, were such as could not be removed by the colonies themselves. As to the clause respecting the non-separation of females from their children, only five had yet agreed to it. As to the clause relating to the punishment of slaves and the abolition of the use of the whip, he had to inform them that eight had adopted new regulations, meeting in one way or another the wishes of the British parliament. With regard to the clause abolishing the corporal punishment of females, he was sorry to say that but five of the colonial legislatures had acceded to it, though he thought that the adoption of it was one of the plainest modes which could have been devised for evincing their disposition to meet the wishes and recommendations of the people of England. He would confess, that if there was one point more than another on which he could bring himself to adopt the resolution of the hon. member for Weymouth, rather than his own, it was the refusal of the colonies to abolish the corporal punishment of females, for which no pretence whatever could be alleged,

except a disposition to fly in the face of the recommendation of the mother country. With regard to the Saving-banks, he found that none had yet been established in any of the colonies, but that two of them had adopted the clause for the regulation of them. He did not state this as a satisfactory result of the measures proposed by government; far from it, he stated it, because the point which they were then discussing—not, indeed, formally, because it was not regularly before the House—was, whether the time had yet come when the resistance of the colonies to the wishes of parliament was so contumacious as to render it absolutely necessary for us to abandon the system which we had hitherto pursued, to begin our course anew, and to stir a question on which, if it were stirred, he had no hesitation as to the opinion which he should give, but which he thought it expedient not to moot unnecessarily — namely, the question how far the parliament of England had a right to legislate for the colonies. He would not pretend to say that the late proceedings of the legislature of the principal island for wealth, extent, and consideration in the West Indies had not filled him with sentiments which he would not trust himself to express in that House. He was free to confess, that when, at the same moment, he viewed the proceedings on the trials of some insurgent slaves, where, upon slave evidence, unsworn he admitted, life had been taken away, justifiably as he believed, by the slave-masters of Jamaica, and the proceedings on the recent debates of the same individuals on the admissibility of negroe evidence,—when he contrasted the result of those trials with the circumstances under which the bill had been thrown out for admitting black evidence under great modifications in cases where whites were implicated—he was free to confess, that when he first looked upon this picture, and then upon that, the contrast did appear to him most disgusting and most revolting. He could not but address an imploring voice to the members of the legislature of Jamaica; he could not but exhort them, by all that was dear to them as men and Christians, to wipe out without delay the disgraceful stain which their vote upon that occasion had left upon their general and individual character. He need not tell the House that on private information it could not legislate, though perhaps private information might be sufficient to prevent them from taking a step which must be productive of decisive consequences. From private information which he had received, he entertained the strongest hopes that, in the next session of the legislative assembly of Jamaica, the bill which had recently been rejected would be passed. He could not lay before the House the evidence which induced him to believe that the chance of such an event had considerably improved; but he had seen documents, and received information, and had been shown an analysis of the late division in that assembly, which led him to hope that in its next session the bill would be carried by a large majority. He was desirous of giving to the colonial legislatures another chance of bringing about, by their own agency, the consummation of all that the British parliament wished, without the disturbance of the established system, or the agitation of the question, from which, though he should not hesitate to enter into it when the occasion demanded, considerable difficulties, which he wished if possible to avoid, would of necessity ensue when it was once mooted. He would give them space and respite for a further trial. He agreed with the hon. member for Weymouth, that after the time of that space and that respite had expired, the period might come when it would be the duty of parliament to take the matter out of the hands of the colonial legislatures, and when it would be the duty of government to come forward and ask parliament for those additional powers which it would be requisite to intrust to it for the accomplishment of those objects which the colonial assemblies had refused to effect by their own exertions.

He had now nearly answered the question which had been propounded by the hon. member. He had only to add to what he had already said, that, during the interval between this time and the next session, ministers would adopt a course of proceeding which would bring the sincerity of the colonial assemblies to a *trial*. They would exercise a privilege which the law allowed them, and would direct their own officers to introduce into each of the colonial legislatures a bill, embracing all the instructions of the Order in Council, so that they would be enforced to accept or reject it in the course of the next colonial session. The House would now see that there were three gradations

in the measures which the government had recommended to the consideration of the colonies. After the House had come to its first vote upon this subject, it was transmitted to the colonial legislatures, along with a recommendation from the government, that they would conform their measures to it. That plan not succeeding, the government drew up an enactment to the same effect, imposed it as law where it had the power, and recommended it for adoption where, though it had the power as an ultimate resort, it was not in the habit of exercising it. That plan having failed, as well as its predecessor, the government had now determined to try another. They had determined to submit acts, framed upon the Order of Council, to every colonial legislature, and thus each of them would have an opportunity either of accepting or rejecting them altogether, or of modifying them so as to meet the situation of each individual colony. He should be extremely sorry if the course of this experiment should be interrupted; for he was persuaded that the success of it was only prevented by the great misconception which prevailed in the colonies respecting the objects which the government wished to effectuate. If the House would only recollect how many things there were, plain to the understanding as well as dear to the wishes of the country, which it had taken years to insinuate into the British parliament, it was not too much to affirm, that a succession of three sessions was not too long a time for endeavouring to insinuate into the colonial legislatures the adoption of a system which had taken them, to a considerable degree, by surprise, and by which every individual member of them supposed that his own personal interests were likely to be materially injured. He had been told, that in many cases the planters had got an idea that they were entitled to a compensation for the deterioration which their property would undergo, in consequence of the changes which the system proposed to them would introduce. He knew not in what that deterioration of property could consist, except it were in the manner in which their slaves might be withdrawn from them by the compulsory manumission which had been proposed. A compensation would be found for that loss in the appraisement of the slaves so withdrawn; but a compensation upon any other principle, he would say at once, would not be given. It would be found in the increased value of the slave's labour; it would be found in his increased comforts and happiness; it would be found in the gradual approximation of his feelings to the feelings of the white, and to the moral existence and dignity of man. Many misconceptions existed on other points, which he had little doubt would be done away upon parliament making an exposition of the views which it entertained upon this subject. At any rate, the trial was worth making; and he should grieve exceedingly, if parliament should take any step which should tend to intercept the success of a measure, which, if it succeeded, would be more acceptable to all parties as a voluntary measure, than it would be as a measure accomplished by forcible interference, and which, if it failed, would afford us the consolatory reflection that we had not resorted to other measures until we had completely exhausted the expectation that the colonists would of their own accord, perform that which they were called on to perform by a due regard to their character and their interests.

The hon. member for Weymouth had endeavoured to anticipate this part of his argument by reminding the House of a speech of his (Mr. Canning) made in the last century, regarding the folly of trusting to the slave-masters for any measures of protection for the slaves. He could not but admire the tact with which the hon. member had pressed against him the sentiments which he had formerly expressed; and it made him feel that which he had often before felt—namely, considerable envy for those, who, being under no responsibility, could safely give loose to the enthusiasm of their nature, whilst they threw upon others the task of curbing that enthusiasm within proper limits, and of moderating the ardour with which they indulged in the ebullition of their feelings. He thought that he could hardly be considered bound by a speech which he had made in the last century, when he was ardent in youth, and not so prudent as he was at present, though even now he was not considered over prudent [a laugh]. It would be a little too hard to bind men by the opinions which they had crudely conceived and thoughtlessly expressed in early life. He believed that the hon. and learned gentleman opposite (Mr. Brougham) would protest against such a rule quite as loudly as he did; for he had

seen some extracts from a work of his on colonial policy in the newspapers—and without offence to the hon. and learned gentleman, he might say that he had never read any part of that work till that morning—which he thought the hon. and learned gentleman would hardly like to stand to at the present moment. He conceived, besides, that in the situation which he now filled as a member of the executive government which had to give effect to the votes of that House, he was hardly bound by what he had said in the last century of the rashness of trusting to slave-masters. If he might form an opinion, from the words which the hon. member had done him the honour of quoting from his speech, he must at the time when he used them, have been expressing himself on the question of the abolition of the slave-trade; for in those days the question of the emancipation of the slaves had not even been dreamed of. And as during those days the colonists maintained that the abolition of the slave-trade was contrary to their interests—a point on which experience had convinced them that they were mistaken—it was not impossible that he might have stated, that the possession of uncontrolled power with the certainty of unlimited supply, was not a situation in which much economy of labour, comfort, or even life could be expected. This remark, which he did not recollect applying particularly to the slave-master, was true in all the relations of life. The general who led an army of 100,000 men would engage in rasher enterprises than he who only acted from a nucleus of 25,000; and it was according to the first principles of human nature, that the man who was in possession of uncontrolled power, with the certainty of unlimited supply, should be less chary of, and therefore less trusted for, the comforts of others, than the man whose power was bounded, and whose resources were confined. If such was the tenour of his argument upon a former occasion, what he had that day said was consistent with it. Did he now either trust himself, or call upon the House to trust, the uncontrolled feelings of the masters, when he called upon the colonial assemblies to legislate for the slaves upon the principles pointed out to them by the British parliament, and told them that if they did not do it willingly, they must do it before long by compulsion? Was that leaving the masters in a state of uncontrolled liberty? Was it not taking every measure that could be taken short of immediate coercion? For immediate coercion, he confessed he was not prepared. The contumacy of the colonists had not yet risen to such a degree as to justify the application of it. He thought he already saw symptoms on the part of the colonists of a disposition to depart from their old system; and he would therefore allow them an interval during which they might mitigate, if they were so inclined, the long-continued severity of it. In that interval he would take care that the question should be brought before their legislative assemblies, in such a manner that it could not be evaded; and, in order to give more solemnity to the new stipulations which he intended to propose to them, it was his intention to supply an omission which he had not seen upon a former occasion, by moving that a copy of the resolutions to which the House had formerly agreed should be transmitted to the House of Peers for its approval. In the present state of the question, with a full recollection of what had passed in the old times to which the hon. member for Weymouth had alluded, and with a perfect reliance that what had been done in that House would not now be undone elsewhere, he thought it right to put the House of Peers in possession of what they had resolved upon the subject. He had now stated the full extent of every thing which it was in the contemplation of government to do upon it during the present session. In consequence of the arguments which he had stated, he should resist all attempts to legislate for the colonies at present; but he should resist them, neither denying the right, nor disputing the title of parliament to interfere, but simply not agreeing as to the time when such an interference would be both just and necessary.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he rose to ask a question of the right hon. gentleman. The most important of the instructions containe in the Order in Council, without denying the importance of the others, was that which related to the manumission of slaves; meaning thereby not the lowering of the duties hitherto paid upon the manumission, but the power of compelling the master to sell the slave his freedom upon an appraisement. The instruction which was next in importance, was that which related to the competency of slave evidence—meaning thereby the admissibility

of negro evidence in cases where whites were interested. The third in importance was the instruction respecting the whip or driving,—meaning thereby not any regulation controlling the power of the driver by limiting the number of lashes to be inflicted at once, but the abolition of the driving system, and the use of the whip as a stimulus to labour. Now, taking manumission, slave-evidence, and the whip, in the three significations which he had described, what, he asked, was this—how many of the colonies having legislatures of their own had, up to the present time, passed laws upon the great questions of manumission, slave-evidence, or of the whip and driving system, with the exception of Tobago and Barbadoes, which had made regulations regarding them, in an act which was so objectionable on a thousand other scores, that he could almost have wished that it never had been passed? When he asked how many, he wished to know what colonies, or whether one single colony had done it? He might also add the same question with respect to the clause in the Order of Council prohibiting the separation of husband and wife, and parent and child, among the negro slaves.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that St. Vincent's, Tobago, St. Kitt's, Dominica, Antigua, Grenada, and St. Lucia had passed laws permitting the admissibility of negro evidence. With regard to manumission in the sense given to it by the hon. and learned gentleman, only one colony had permitted it. The instruction regarding the non-separation of families had been adopted by five of the colonies, by Tobago, St. Kitt's, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Dominica. In the island of St. Vincent the whip was completely abolished.

Mr. *F. Buxton* wished to know whether any thing had been done in Jamaica to secure to the negroes the bequests made to them? He asked this question, because the governor, in a speech to the House of Assembly in December last, had told them, that another session had passed away without any thing having been done for the amelioration of the slave-population of the island. From every thing which had transpired since of the proceedings of the planters, it was not likely that any amelioration had been subsequently agreed to.

Mr. *Canning* said, that the power of taking by bequest, a point of no small importance, had been secured to the slave by the regulations made for the general security of his property.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that government ought to give parliament distinctly to understand, that it would be called upon to legislate for the colonies in case the bills which the right hon. gentleman had mentioned were not carried in the next session of the colonial legislatures. In alluding to the parochial resolutions of the towns in Jamaica, the hon. member observed, that he would not charge upon the colonial assembly of that island the vain and idle threats which they contained. It was evident, however, to all who had read the duke of Manchester's speech to that body, that it was animated by a spirit of inveterate hostility to any amelioration in the present slave system. He begged the House to attend to a few paragraphs in it. The duke of Manchester addressed them thus:—"Another year has been allowed to pass away without your having taken any effectual measure for the improvement of the condition of the negroes. It does not become me to anticipate the result of the disappointment of the British government, when it learns that the reiterated representations which it has made to you to do that which your own interests require, no less than the comforts of those who depend upon you, have totally failed. In obeying the instructions which I have received from his majesty's ministers, I earnestly press upon you the necessity of doing something, if not to disarm your enemies, at least to satisfy your friends, and to convince parliament that the urgent representations which the government, in obedience to its directions, have made to you, have not been entirely disregarded." This was not his language, but the language of the duke of Manchester, the governor of the island. Had the House since the arrival of that document, learned that the colonial legislature had shown any symptom of repentance? Not one single syllable had transpired to that effect. On the contrary, in that very debate which terminated in the rejection of the instructions contained in the Order of Council, there was not the slightest symptom of yielding exhibited, though all the speakers must have known the ticklish station in which their cause stood. The contumacy which they then exhibited displayed a spirit which, in his opinion, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs would find it impossible to subdue by kindness. He might depend upon it that it would only

yield to fear or force. If it did not yield to the first, the last must undoubtedly be employed. In conclusion, he contended that the general principles which the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs had formerly laid down in advocating the abolition of the slave-trade, applied with equal truth and force to the present question of the emancipation of the slave.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* rose, he said, for the purpose of cautioning hon. gentlemen against using any expressions which might tend to irritate the feelings of persons who were in any degree opposed to the measure which they advocated. His apology for giving this caution, if any apology were necessary, must be, that the use of language of that description was calculated more than any other thing to throw obstacles in the way of that amelioration of the condition of the slaves which was so earnestly desired. That which appeared to him to be the most prudent course would be to proceed slowly and moderately; and, having ascertained what regulations were likely to attain the object they had in view, to put it plainly to the several colonies, either to adopt or reject the measures which the parliament had suggested, and which he hoped, from the bottom of his heart, they would unanimously agree to act upon. He was equally convinced that it was of the highest importance to avoid all irritating and exasperating language, because that was directly calculated to induce the colonists not to concur in the measures which the House should recommend. He was sure there could be no difference of opinion as to the importance of having the concurrence of those colonists. Any thing that the legislature wished to effect, would be much better performed by willing than by unwilling witnesses. When he said this, he was sure it would not be supposed that he felt any thing like indifference to the amelioration of the condition of the slaves, in as speedy, and in as ample a manner as could be. He could assure the House that it was his warmest wish to see this carried into effect; and he had every reason to believe that it would be better, as well as sooner accomplished by being recommended to the West-India colonists in the language of friendly opinion, and left to their sense of humanity, and of their common interests. It could not be in better than in their own hands, because their experience and knowledge would enable them to ameliorate the condition of the slaves in a more practical manner than any enactments which the legislature might make. There were, however, some points upon which much longer delay was impossible, and on which, if something was not speedily done by the colonists, every principle of justice, humanity, and common sense, would impel the House to interfere. He hoped that, before the next session, some regulations respecting the qualification of slaves to give evidence in courts of justice would be adopted; for this appeared to him to be a subject of paramount importance. He did not mean, by selecting this point, to undervalue the others; but this was one which, as it now stood, kept up a state of things which could not be suffered to exist. He trusted that the colonists would see that in originating the alterations which the present system required, they would at once adopt the safest, and, to use the expression of his right hon. friend, the cheapest course, and evince in the most satisfactory manner the earnestness of that desire which they professed, to improve the condition of their slaves. Without attempting or wishing to interfere with the relative interests of the masters or of the slaves, this principle of justice, that the courts of law should not be closed against them, was obvious; and even looking at it with a still closer application to the case before them, it could not be denied that the interests of the masters would be enhanced in proportion as the condition of the slaves was improved. It was impossible that any practical evil could result from this measure. The competency of the slave would first be examined in the court in which it should be offered, and next his credibility; and the whole effect of his evidence would be left to a jury of whites. He could not, therefore, imagine a reason why there should be any delay in capacitating slaves to give evidence. The devices which had been adopted in some of the colonies showed also the necessity of putting this subject on a plain and general footing. In some colonies the slaves were permitted only to give evidence where the whites were not the parties accused. But suppose that all the evidence of the white witnesses was in favour of the criminal, he would therefore escape the punishment which his offences might have deserved, because the only witnesses who could prove his guilt were silenced. The chief value, however, of this measure was, that it would place the responsibility,

in all cases, upon the tribunals, and not upon the law. If it was really the earnest intention of the colonists to raise the condition of the slaves, he thought there could be no objection to this measure, because it was quite safe, and only conferred on them a common privilege of humanity: but if they were to be kept in a condition no better than that of the brutes, then, indeed, he could understand why it ought to be withheld from them. That it was safe no man could doubt, because, as with the evidence of infants or idiots, it was in practice in this country. The same rule might be followed with respect to slaves. Their competency would first be decided upon by the court, and then their credibility, and the effect of the whole would be left to have such weight as it might deserve with the jury. He had purposely refrained from touching upon many other topics connected with the subject which invited discussion, lest the strong feelings which they must excite should lead him into expressions that might irritate persons connected with the colonial interests, and retard that amelioration of the condition of the slaves which it was his earnest desire to effect.

Mr. *Scarlett* regretted that the conduct of the Legislative Assembly of Jamaica had been such as to call for the censure of every moderate person. He was sure that in that assembly there were many individuals who had the strongest feelings in favour of the amelioration of the slaves, and who, notwithstanding the irritation under which they appeared recently to have laboured, were as anxious as any one in this country to accomplish that which he believed was the common wish of mankind. He was free to confess, that there were many topics on which, if the legislative bodies of the various colonies did not act promptly, the parliament must. The one alluded to by the right hon. gentleman was foremost among them. His earliest prejudices were connected with horror at the treatment of the slaves, and his first wish was to see their condition ameliorated. At the same time, it was not improbable that he might differ from many of those who entertained the same desire, as to the shortest and best mode of effecting that object. He thought that, in the first place, the masters ought to be conciliated. In his opinion, any language of irritation, of censure, and, more than all, of a threatening kind, would postpone, perhaps effectually prevent, what was sought. The milder means of suggestion should, he thought, be tried before the legislature moved on the subject; and he should be inclined to trust to those means having the effect which was hoped for, even with persons whose recent conduct, he must admit, was open to reproach. He regretted the reluctance which the colonial governments had manifested to adopt the suggestions of his majesty's government; but he was convinced that the language used in that House and elsewhere, of the acrimonious nature he had alluded to, had been the cause of the obstacles that had prevented those suggestions from having the weight to which they were entitled. He had been anxious to express the opinion he had now uttered; but as to the particular mode in which the improvement of the condition of the slaves was to be effected, that was a topic from which he should at present abstain. The point which the right hon. gentleman had mentioned was that which took the lead, and he had a hope so strong that it amounted almost to a prediction, that if the task of suggesting the manner in which the improvement should be effected were left to the governments best qualified to ascertain it, the desire, which had been expressed throughout the kingdom on this subject, would be accomplished.

Mr. *Philips* expressed his astonishment that there should be so great a difference as seemed to exist between the West-India proprietors resident in this country, and those who were in the colonies. He had observed with great regret, that a disposition existed in the colonies not to listen to the recommendations of government, and that great apprehensions were expressed as to the injurious effect which they might have upon the property of the persons interested. The same objections and the same reluctance had been manifested when the abolition of the slave-trade was proposed. The ruin of the colonies was predicted then; but the result, instead of justifying the gloomy apprehensions which were entertained, was now a topic of universal congratulation. He had no doubt that the same effect would be produced in the present instance if his majesty's ministers would act the same part. He, for one, begged that they would do so; for he should be sorry to see the subject out of the hands of the government; whose temper and moderation would ensure the protection of the

property of the colonists, while they improved the condition of the slaves.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, he was anxious to say a few words in furtherance of the remarks which had been made by his right hon. friend. If the subject were unincumbered with other considerations, and were one upon which the House could at once effectually and satisfactorily legislate, he should have wished that the motion of the hon. and learned gentleman had been brought forward without delay. But, if the House entertained a strong opinion that the measures which had been taken by the government were such as were calculated to accomplish the objects proposed by parliament, with respect to the improvement of the condition of the slaves in our West-Indian colonies—he must confess that he should see with deep regret the hon. and learned gentleman opposite prevail, in any thing like an attempt to wrest from the government the management of so momentous an undertaking; in the conduct of which they had thus far succeeded in obtaining the approbation of hon. gentlemen, as it should seem, on all sides. Any body who had looked at all the various details of this great question with that degree of minuteness and accuracy which the facilities of the office which he held, had enabled him to exercise, would strongly feel that it was of the utmost importance to clear away all misconceptions about the subject, in order to arrive at the accomplishment of the object which it was wished to attain. Now, any hon. gentleman who had examined the various protests made in various colonies against the measures of the government, must have at once perceived that those protests invariably turned upon the assumption that the adoption of the views of this House would destroy the now subsisting relations between the slave and the master—would weaken the authority at present exercised by the latter over the former, and thereby deteriorate the property of the master in a fatal degree. In exact proportion as that erroneous conviction might fade away before, not only the power of argument but the more convincing test of experiment, the opposition of the colonists and the colonial legislatures to these measures would give way. And he put it to hon. gentlemen, with reference to the facts of the case, whether such opposition arose out of any abstract love of slavery on the part of the West-India planters, or from a dread of seeing the authority of the master over the slave neutralized and destroyed? He would now take the liberty of reading a letter, which had that day been, put into his hands, that would illustrate the correctness of his reasoning. It would be remembered, that on the 1st of January 1826, the Order in Council relative to Demerara came into operation. That was an order initiated in Demerara, and adopting the order relative to Trinidad, with the exception of three clauses only. In Demerara, from the moment that the operation of this order began, it was expected by the planters that the authority of the master would be annihilated. The letter was in these terms: "You may recollect the alarm and apprehension we all felt at the possible effect of the new regulations respecting the abolition of the whip, and the other great changes then about to be made in the treatment of the slaves. I am most happy to be able to state, that, although all these regulations have been since enforced, I have not heard of a single instance of any inconvenience having arisen from them. I explained to the negroes on both estates the nature of the new laws; and that all punishments under them would be entered in a book called 'The Black Book,'—or 'Punishment Record Book;' and that, if their names appeared among them, they would be sent up to the Fiscal. I said, that the new stocks and the black-hole would not be used by me, unless their own conduct should render it necessary for me to resort to those punishments: and that the money it would cost to build a new gaol on the estate, would be much rather expended by me in building new huts for them." The writer went on to say that the negroes seemed very sensible of the advantages offered to them by these new arrangements, and that he expected there would be very little writing in that "Black-Book." This letter certainly did much honour to the person who wrote it. It was dated 9th of January, 1826. The House should be informed, that in Trinidad a system of task-work had lately been practically pursued. The effect of that system was simply this. The average work of a slave had been calculated, and an allowance of work had been assigned to him accordingly. The slave was then told, that if he concluded that labour before the expiration of the day, the remainder of such day should be his own,

for the purpose of relaxation, or labour on his own account, or for hire, as he chose. He felt gratified in being able to say, that this system had been found to succeed remarkably well, and in many instances, the slave had realized considerable emolument by his labour, after concluding such allotted work. Without attempting to build, however, any argument upon this fact, he would only say, it was clearly to be expected, that in proportion as the colonists had time to observe and experience the practical effects of such of these recommendations of parliament, for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves, as had been acted upon; parliament had a right to expect the compliance of the colonial legislatures in the general measures it had propounded to them; notwithstanding that, at present, there were instances—and memorable ones too—of opposition to them. In Jamaica, where, perhaps, the principle of resistance had been most strongly manifested, it had been stated in the most express and solemn manner, in all the speeches, protests, and remonstrances on this subject, that if they were only satisfied that their property would not be prejudicially affected by the measures in question, they would not resist them for a single hour. It was, therefore, that he looked to the happiest effects from the lapse of a little more time. These great changes, indeed, in the political condition of a whole class of people were not to be effected in a moment. Time was absolutely necessary to mature them. Let any man fairly consider the time which had been found necessary to remove prejudices in this country, on subjects on which there was now an universal concurrence of opinion. Feeling as he did, that it was of the utmost importance for the House, if possible, to carry the master with them in the execution of their purpose, he agreed with his right hon. friend in the expediency of pausing before any legislative interference, on the part of this country, should be determined on. And although Jamaica and other colonies might be at present more or less opposed to the proceedings of parliament on this great question, let it not be supposed that there were not other of our colonies in which much had not already been done in furtherance of the views of this government. He begged the attention of the House in particular to the case of St. Vincent, where a bill had been passed (of which a copy had just reached him) providing, that sundry markets in that island should be limited to an early hour in the morning; that slave evidence in all criminal cases should be admitted; that the marriages of slaves should be registered; and that their rights of property should be further secured by a bill. In Dominica again, slaves were to be admitted to give evidence in criminal cases, not affecting the lives or property of their masters. He did not mean to say that this was enough: but it was much: and more might fairly be expected to follow. He would again appeal to the House, whether a more safe or practicable course could be adopted, with a view to the objects it proposed to itself, than that the full effect of the measures which had been stated by his right hon. friend should be allowed to transpire, before any sort of interference of parliament should take place. What was to be the nature of the measure proposed by the hon. and learned gentleman he did not know; but he did trust that if the House were satisfied with the sincerity and firmness of his majesty's government in the measures they had already taken, they would allow the necessary time for the operation of those proceedings on the colonial legislatures of the West Indies, before they resolved to interfere, and interrupt the present condition of the measures in question.

Mr. *Keith Douglas* expressed his perfect concurrence in the course proposed by his majesty's government — a course which, without injuring the interests of any class of the colonists, would eventually promote the prosperity of all.

Mr. *Sykes* blamed the government for their backwardness in carrying on the work of improving the slaves. He thought they had been criminally negligent in not insisting that the colonial legislatures should take the necessary steps for ameliorating the condition of the slaves. He referred to some of the acts still in force in some of the colonies, particularly one, in which a slave was declared punishable for riding or driving a horse except at a gentle pace. Could the condition of the slaves be said to be in a course of amelioration when laws such as these were still cherished in the West India Islands? It was now three years since the Resolutions referred to had been agreed to; and yet how little had been since done. He did not want to press the government, but he thought that some time should be speci-

fied when the intentions of parliament would be carried into effect.

Sir *F. Blake* said, that the slaves in the West Indies suffered a great deal from the suspense in which they were kept as to the time when their slavery was to cease. He thought that a law ought to be passed, putting an end to it at a certain period.

Mr. *T. Wilson* declared himself hostile to any measure which should have for its object to set the slaves free at the expense of their masters. He very much doubted whether such beneficial effects would result from free labour, as some persons anticipated. He begged leave to refer the House to the example of St. Domingo. That island formerly exported considerable quantities of sugar, but now the free negroes were even unable to produce good sugar, and could only make a kind of molasses. He deprecated any interference with private property. The emancipation of the black population was a subject that ought to be touched upon very tenderly. If a compulsory measure were resorted to, the planters ought to receive compensation. The petitioners from London had, he observed, stated their willingness to contribute towards a fund for compensating the planters for the loss of their slaves, in the event of parliament thinking it proper to emancipate them.

Mr. *Grossett* said, that the House seemed to pass over entirely the state of slavery in which many of the natives of the East Indies were held; a slavery which was more abject and degrading than that in the West Indies.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the only slaves within the Company's territories in India were dancing girls, who were bought when young for the amusement of rich persons. If however any of these slaves ran away from their masters, there was no power by which they could be compelled to return; there was therefore, a great distinction between the state of slavery in the East and in the West Indies. He would appeal to the late chief justice of Bengal (sir H. East) for the correctness of his statement. With respect to the question before the House, there was no man who was more anxious to see slavery in the West-India colonies abolished than himself; but he was not desirous to have that great object effected in a manner which was more likely to prove injurious to the slaves, than to add to their comfort and happiness. Ministers had established certain regulations for the amelioration of the slave population, and he thought that that ought for the present to satisfy the advocates of emancipation. The planters, it was true, had rejected the propositions of ministers, in which he thought they had done wrong; for their property would not, in his opinion, be at all injured by the gradual adoption of them. It was, however, by moderate measures alone that emancipation could be effected. It would be desirable, in order to afford the House an opportunity of estimating the advantage of free labour, that ministers should place before them the results of the experiments which had been made on that subject during the last twenty years. It was well known that manumitted slaves had been carried from America to Trinidad, where land had been allotted to them, and every opportunity afforded for improving their condition. A number of years had elapsed since that measure was adopted, and the House ought to be informed of the result. At Sierra Leone there were 30,000 freed negroes, and of these 16,000 were furnished with houses, and clothes, and land to cultivate. He was informed that general Turner, the governor, employed some of these negroes to work in the building of a new arsenal; but he was soon obliged to give them up, for he could get no work from them. If accurate information as to the results of free labour were laid before the country, it might tend to moderate the zeal of the friends of emancipation; for he was compelled to acknowledge that the zeal of some of those persons had led them to commit acts of indiscretion. Prints calculated to excite the passions of the multitude, had been put forth. One of these prints represented the flogging of a female, which took place in 1782. One word with respect to compensation. Beyond all question, slaves were the property of their masters. The masters, he thought, were placed in a very unfortunate situation, and ought to be pitied rather than reviled. Any regulations which might be adopted for ameliorating the condition of the slaves, formed no ground whatever for compensation; but he was decidedly of opinion, that compensation was due to the planters, if parliament should at once take the slaves from the planters; which, after all, he thought would be the best mode of dealing with the question.

Sir *Hyde East* said, that having been appealed to by the hon. member, he could only state that he could give no information from his personal knowledge of the practice in the interior of India. With respect to those parts of which he had any knowledge, he believed the hon. member was correct. He begged to offer a few observations on the question before the House. He was one of those unfortunate persons alluded to, who possessed property in the West Indies; but he had always thought it his duty to have it managed in the way most advantageous to the slaves. Three years back he concurred in the question for the abolition of slavery, and he had seen no reason since to repent the vote he then gave. He had also concurred in every measure for ameliorating the condition of the slaves; and, on his own estate, had directed every thing to be done with a view to that object. With respect to the last question agitated in the assembly of Jamaica, for admitting the evidence of slaves, he had recommended the adoption of it to his friends there, and though lately rejected, he had no doubt that it would ultimately be successful. In this he had acted from principle, not from any wish to ingratiate himself with the House, or the country. He strongly disapproved of the attempts made to inflame the prejudices of the people. The great object should be to do the most good with the least possible injury. It could not lead to any good effect to hold out threats. It tended only to excite opposition; for all public bodies were naturally riotous when other bodies interfered with what they conceived to be their rights. It was not, in his opinion, advisable to call upon government to enter into any particular pledge upon the subject. It might tend only to irritation, and no measure could be successfully carried into effect without the concurrence of those who were interested in its execution. It was desirable that instruction should be given to the slaves as much as possible, and it gave him pleasure to find, that throughout all the colonies the religious establishments were received with open hands, and without any instance of disapprobation. This was a proof, that when property was not concerned, there was no objection to any thing that could lead to the amelioration of the condition of the slaves. Where a question of property, however, arose, it was very natural for the colonial proprietors to say, that their estates had been held for a term of 150 years, under the sanction of law, and that it would be too hard now to turn round on them and say, that their property was to be all of a sudden rendered of little comparative value.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he wished to advert shortly to what had fallen from his hon. and learned friend who spoke last, and also from the hon. member for Montrose. He denied that there was any intention, or any attempt to inflame the feelings on this subject. The petitions—he did not mean to say all, but the greater part—were drawn up with temperance and moderation. Any warmth of feeling that had manifested itself, referred only to that part of the subject on which there was no difference of feeling, either in the House or out of it; he meant the enormous practical abuses that prevailed in the colonies. To the existence of these abuses they had not merely the testimony of travellers, which might be often too highly coloured. The strongest appeals to feeling were made, not in the writings of those who advocated the abolition of colonial slavery, but in the speeches of the colonial legislatures themselves. To the surviving commissioner, the other having unfortunately died, they were indebted for an account, which might be relied upon, of the most appalling details of the infernal system. But was it to be contended, because he (Mr. Brougham) spoke thus of the system, that he was therefore an advocate for precipitate and heedless emancipation. None of the petitions called upon them to pursue so rapid a course. By compulsory manumission he did not mean to intimate that the whole mass of slaves were, at once, and without further preparation, to be set free; but that, if a slave should become possessed of the means of purchasing his freedom, some provision should be made for compelling the owner to grant it, on a fair appraisement. That means should be taken suddenly to emancipate the whole mass, he did not now, nor ever did, maintain. For the slaves themselves it would not be the most advantageous way of proceeding. With respect to the work alluded to by the right hon. gentleman, it was written a quarter of a century back, and if, in the course of that period, he had seen any reason to alter opinions entertained so far back, he would not hesitate to avow it. It was stated in

a placard, handed about, that he, some years back, maintained that the mother country should interfere only with the abolition of the slave-trade, leaving it to the local authorities to do all the rest. What he held, at the time alluded to, was, that it could be done more effectually by the local authorities, as possessing better means of information than those who resided at so great a distance. But so many years having elapsed, and no step having been taken by the colonial legislatures, he thought the time had arrived when the mother country should no longer suffer herself to be trifled with. He wished to avoid the language of irritation: it would be improper upon such a subject; it would be peculiarly improper in that House. He must however express his great disappointment and surprise, that all that had been done amounted to so little. It appeared that only one of the colonies had adopted any regulation with respect to that most accursed practice, the driving system. The island of St. Vincent, in which it was adopted, possessed a population of only 9,000 slaves, while that of all the West-India colonies amounted to 900,000; so that the relief thus afforded could be felt only in the proportion of one to every hundred. With respect to receiving the evidence of slaves, no change of any importance had taken place except in Tobago. At St. Vincent and Dominica an alleviation, but an imperfect one, had taken place; for the evidence of a slave maltreated by his master—a case in which protection was most necessary—could not be received. Both in Jamaica and Barbadoes, the recommendations sent out in 1822 by lord Bathurst, and the Order in Council, had met with a marked and peremptory refusal. It was rejected only by a majority of two to one: but even the majority confessed, that their support was grounded solely on the supposition that it was to be the last measure of the kind. Though the colonial assembly did not appear to him to have taken an enlightened view of their own interests, still there was, upon the occasion, a display of talent that would have done credit to any assembly. This he was ready to acknowledge, though he himself, and men far his superiors in every respect, had been made objects of vituperation. In this, however, he had for his companions the West-India body in this country. The bitterest of all the attacks were directed against the latter. These were his reasons for auguring ill of the future. But, perhaps, the colonial legislatures were not so much to be blamed, surrounded as they were by persons less informed, and, of course, far more violent than themselves in their opposition. In the parochial meetings, so far from manifesting a spirit of concession, they called for more restrictive measures, until, as they expressed it, the slave population were reclaimed, and showed symptoms of repentance—repentance, he supposed, for the dreadful wrongs inflicted on them. He could expect little from the colonial legislatures, until they concurred in carrying into effect the Order in Council. They who acted with him did not use the language of menace in the offensive sense. Their only object was, to intimate calmly, that if the colonial legislatures did not act, it might become a necessary duty on the part of the British parliament, to take measures for the relief of their fellow-subjects located in the colonies. Though ministers here might not think it expedient to pledge themselves now to any future course, still if it were intimated to the colonial authorities, that they were not opposed to some measure of relief, that intimation would, he hoped, have considerable effect. He was nevertheless, not so sanguine in this hope, as to abandon the motion of which he had given notice. But after what he had heard of the intentions of his majesty's ministers he was induced to pause in his intention of bringing it on that evening. Another reason for postponing it was, the knowledge that there was some information forthcoming, which it would be better should be previously before the House. He therefore wished to reconsider the point whether the motion should or should not be brought forward this session. This question he was not able now to decide. He must, however, repeat, that he was not satisfied; that he had no confidence in the colonial legislatures; and that, in his opinion, the measures suggested by government could not be carried into effect without the interference of parliament. He trusted, therefore, that he should not be charged with inconsistency if, after the recess, he should feel it to be his duty to press the motion on the House.

Mr. *R. Gordon* professed his acquiescence in the views of the right hon. Secretary, as to the colonies. He agreed with him,

that the colonial assemblies, as being best acquainted with the local interests, ought to be first tried; but that if they kept pertinaciously backward, coercion was then justifiable. He was, however, opposed, on principle, to the interference of that House with the colonial legislatures. He wished to see the colonies governed either by their local assemblies, or immediately by the king in council.

Mr. *W. Bankes* agreed, that the sense of the House ought to be expressed in a tone which would make an impression upon the colonial assemblies. He deprecated menace; but if those assemblies pertinaciously refused to adopt measures for ameliorating the condition of the slaves, the House ought to take the law into its own hands. He did not at present name any time for such a course; but decidedly the day ought not to be a late one. He hoped that the colonists might yet take warning before it was too late.

Mr. *F. Buxton*, in reply, said, that satisfied as many gentlemen seemed to be with the declaration of ministers, he could not help being entirely disappointed with it. As for the picture which had been adverted to as circulated by the friends of abolition, he repelled the accusation. They were incapable of degrading themselves by sanctioning such publications; and he himself had never seen the paper in question but once, and that had been in the possession of a West Indian. He was pleased with the observation of an hon. member, which had called up the hon. baronet; because the hon. baronet's testimony settled the question as to the comparative state of the law in the East and West Indies. In the East Indies, if a slave absented himself six months from his master, he had only to go before a judge when taken, who at once liberated him from prison, and sent him to his duty; while, in the West Indies for a similar desertion, he was liable to be hanged or transported. With the general issue, however, of what had passed, he was little satisfied. The delay which was talked of would produce no good. Some trifling concessions, it was possible, the colonists might make; but all the main and most objectionable features of their system, the House might rely upon it, they would most obstinately adhere to.

Ordered to lie on the table, and be printed. The resolution of the 15th of May 1823, was then, on the motion of Mr. Secretary Canning, ordered to be communicated to the Lords at a conference.

CORN LAWS.] Mr. *Brougham* presented a petition from the operatives of the Staffordshire potteries, praying for an alteration in the Corn-laws. The learned gentleman described the petitioners as an industrious and suffering part of the population, and observed, that though there were many points in the petition in which he agreed with the petitioners, there were others from which he must withhold his concurrence.

The petition was then read. One of the allegations in it was, that the country was now in the rapacious gripe of the landlords, and ought to be rescued from it; and another that the landlords took sixpence out of every shilling that they earned.

Mr. *Robertson* complained of the violent language used by the petitioners, and contended that there could not be a greater grievance inflicted on the country than cheap bread. Who were to purchase potteries, if corn became cheap? It was not cheap corn, but good rents, good profits, and well-paid labour that were required to restore the country to prosperity.

Mr. *Hume* defended the statements of the petitioners. Cheap corn would cause the country to flourish, since every person who imported corn would be compelled to take our manufactures in return for it.

Mr. *Calcraft* referred to his uniform support of the lowest import price, when the question of the Corn-laws was before the House. At the same time he thought that those who fostered the prejudices of the people upon this subject, did not take the best mode of advocating their own interests. It was quite impossible to have a low price of corn with a taxation of 60,000,000*l*. a year. It was unfair to say that the country was in the gripe of rapacious landlords, and that they were the only obstacles to its having cheap bread. Give the landlords of England the same chance as the landlords of other countries, and they would sell their corn at as cheap a rate. He begged gentlemen not to hold up the landlords of the country to unmerited obloquy. They had long been renowned for the generosity of their character, and he knew of nothing

which they had recently done to forfeit that character.

Mr. *Bennett* said, that, on the part of the agricultural labourers, he put in a claim. They must be thrown out of employment, if the price of bread should be reduced too low; and, in legislating on the subject, the House was bound to consider equally all classes of the community.

Mr. *Philips* was surprised, that the hon. member for Wareham should say, that it would be a serious disadvantage to the country to have cheap corn. In his opinion, nothing was so injurious to commerce as the existing system of Corn-laws; and without commerce the country could not maintain its rank in the scale of nations.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, he did not advocate dear corn, but he had given it as his opinion, that it was impossible to have cheap corn with an annual taxation of 60,000,000*l*.

Sir *T. Lethbridge* thought, that every member would agree with him, that cheap and dear were relative terms. Cheap corn, according to the hon. member for Aberdeen, meant corn at four or five shillings a bushel. Now if the sale of corn at that price would enable the grower to pay the taxes, he should rejoice to let the country have corn at that price; but he thought that government would not be able to carry on its operations if corn were reduced to that level. He objected to the position that, supposing we permitted the importation of corn, those who imported it would take from us the value in manufactures. The position was contradicted by fact; for the corn that had been imported into this country had always been paid for in coin, the produce of the country.

Lord *Milton* observed, that the hon. member for Somersetshire had said, that corn imported into England was always paid for in coin, the produce of the country. Until the hon. baronet had given him that information, he did not know that coin was the produce of England. He was aware that there were some small gold mines in Ireland; but he had never heard, that there were any in England. He had always understood, that gold was imported into England, and therefore if the corn imported into this country were paid for in gold, that gold must first have been purchased by the industry and the manufactures of the country. Another hon. member, who had put forward the claims of the agricultural labourers,—and really when the claims of the agricultural labourers were put forward in that House, he suspected that the profits of the landlords were the things really meant—another seemed to have an opinion that the agricultural labourers were interested in the dear price of corn. He was himself a landed gentleman, and he must say that it never could be made plain to him, that any class of the community was benefitted by the high price of corn, except the owners of the land. The farmer was clearly not benefitted by it: he obtained the average rate of profit for his capital, but all the excess of the price of corn in this country over the price of it in other countries, allowing for the difference of taxation, went into the pocket of the landlord. That any body would maintain that the high price of corn was beneficial to any but the landlords, was to him a matter of the greatest surprise.

Mr. *Gooch* observed, that the declaration that the landlord alone was interested in the high price of corn was a declaration which every landlord could positively contradict. He was convinced, that from 50*s*. to 60*s*. per quarter was no more than a fair remunerating price; and that any less rate, whatever advantage it might seem to bring along with it, would have the effect of making this country wholly dependent on foreign growers of corn for the support of the people of England. He complained of the gross and violent language in which the petitions were generally couched, and which attributed to the land-owners a desire to keep up the high price of corn, no matter what inconvenience they occasioned to the rest of the country. He denied, on the part of the land-owners generally, any such desire. On the contrary they were convinced that their interests and those of the manufacturers must go hand in hand. He only wished to see the growers of corn encouraged; because he knew if they were not, the consequence would be, that, in the event of a scarcity, 4,000,000*l*. or 5,000,000*l*. of gold would, of necessity, go out of the country to purchase corn. Would that, he asked, not do more harm to the manufacturing interests than fixing a fair and reasonable price, at which British corn should always be sold? If this country could be rendered independent of the powers of the continent for bread, he had always thought it would be so much the better; and with that idea he

had supported, and would support, some restrictions in the way of importation, to protect the British corn-grower.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Bribery and Corruption at Elections.] Lord *John Russell* said, that in rising to move for leave to bring in the bill, of which he had given notice, he did not intend to trespass long on the attention of the House. In former days it had been found, that when complaints had been made to the House respecting the manner in which elections had been made, the decision of the House on those complaints had been so much influenced, that it had been found necessary to adopt a different system respecting them. The House had been obliged (and he did not think it much to their credit that they had been so obliged) to impose upon a select number of their own body the task of deciding, upon their oaths, as to the justice of the complaints made to them. The remedy which had thus been applied, it was generally admitted, had been successful; and so it was as far as regarded the question between party and party, but it was not as successful as far as regarded the interests of the public; for it was evident that there might be corrupt elections, and yet that the committee chosen under the law, commonly called the Grenville act, could not apply the remedy which the case demanded. It might happen that there had been corrupt practices in which the petitioner had engaged, and which he was therefore afraid to bring forward, because he durst not stand the test which, in the committee, would be applied to him. It might also be the desire of the petitioner, who sought to set aside an election on specific grounds, to try another election, when he intended to practise those corrupt practices; which, if they were disclosed to the House, would defeat the return of his opponent. In all these cases, it was manifest, that the public had no protection, and that there were no powers vested in the committee to pursue the matter further than the mere decision upon the merits of the case before them. The public, too, had, by the operation of this act, and the appointment of a committee for such purposes, lost a certain degree of security which they had formerly, when those questions were fully and amply discussed by the whole House of Commons; and when it was in the power of all its members to judge of the extent to which certain practices might have been carried in any particular place. The remedy he would propose was, that, where a complaint had been made upon petition, from any person or place, within the period of six years after the commission of the offence, then the House, if it thought the complaint, upon examination, fit to be entertained, should appoint a committee, in the same manner as under the Grenville act, but composed of only fourteen members, and the member interested in the petition. He did not intend that there should be any power of rejecting those appointed, or striking them off, in consequence of any objections raised by any of the parties. This committee, so appointed, should examine the evidence in support of the allegations, and report to the House their opinion upon the case submitted to them. The reason, he begged to observe, why he proposed that the proceedings should be carried on by petition, as under the Grenville act, rather than by a resolution of the House, was this, that it would be for the House to judge on the terms of the petition, whether it contained matter worthy of being submitted to the consideration of a committee—a course in which there was nothing new, as, on every case of the kind, the House had the power to reject petitions, on the ground that there was nothing in them to warrant their interference; and, after the evidence had been examined in detail before the committee, it would be for the House to declare, whether there was, in the disclosures made by that evidence, a sufficient case to induce the legislature to take further proceedings. He thought it would hardly be said, that the practices to which he had alluded did not require some new remedy. They were known to prevail to a very great extent already; and, in all probability, this year would, in many of the boroughs, give occasion to practices which were disgraceful to those boroughs, and detrimental to the liberties of the people. On this occasion he argued more favourably of the success of his proposition, because he calculated on having in support of it the authority of an hon. gentleman whom he could never yet induce to vote with him in favour of reform, although he had done all in his power to accommodate his notions to those of the hon. gentleman. He alluded particularly to the hon. member for Penryn (Mr. Grenfell), who, he found, had lately been addressing his con-

stituents in language which favoured entirely his own view of this important subject, and which he would read to the House. The hon. member, whose talents would do credit to any place which might send him as a representative to parliament, and who had, upon all occasions served his constituents with the greatest ability and earnestness, now found it necessary to address them in language to this effect:—"Gentlemen, I am under the necessity of informing you, that I mean to withdraw my name as a candidate for the representation of your ancient borough, in the ensuing parliament; and I do so in consequence of having received some very sufficient, though rather unexpected hints, which have satisfied me that it will not be possible to succeed in any attempt to represent you in parliament, unless by having recourse to practices to which I never can submit—practices which have twice, within two years, endangered your existence as a borough, and which, not six years ago, subjected one of your representatives to a heavy fine and a tedious imprisonment, as a punishment for the offences which are now about to be revived." Now, he would ask, not of those who had always voted with him upon the question of reform, but of those who acknowledged that abuses might exist, but refused, as they said, to pull their house about their ears, unless we could point out some specific ground of complaint, and show how we were to apply an efficient remedy—he would ask, whether this was not a case exactly such as they required, and one which would warrant some measure to put down the practice which it announced still to be in existence? He asked them whether it was not the best and most satisfactory mode of proceeding, first to prove the specific grievance, and then to apply the remedy? What he proposed to do was, if the committee should report that general corruption prevailed in a borough, that the House should proceed as in the instances of New Shoreham and Grampound,—that a bill should be brought in for disfranchising them; and then, as the nature of the case might direct, that the right of electing members should be transferred elsewhere. If the neighbouring hundred were a populous one, the franchise might be transferred thither; but if the borough were a small one, and the neighbourhood scanty, then it should be transferred to some populous place in another part of the county,—to follow, in short, the example which had been proposed with respect to Grampound, the franchise of which was to be given to Leeds. The change which that measure had undergone in the House of Lords, in giving it to the county of York instead, he thought was no improvement, but the contrary. In this manner, slowly, but effectually, as far as it went, would the representation of the country be reformed; and, to use an expression of a noble friend of his in the other House of parliament, the wool, the cotton, and the iron of the country would be represented in parliament. He would now conclude without saying at that moment any thing respecting the general question of reform, to which he should be prepared after Easter to call the attention of the House. On that occasion he should avail himself of the authority of a distinguished statesman, as on this he had had the benefit of the address of the hon. member for Penryn to his constituents; and he would call upon the House, in the words of the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on a recent occasion, not to reject the improvement which he should submit to them, "because it was an innovation, lest they might hereafter be compelled to submit to an innovation which was no improvement." The noble lord concluded with a motion for leave to bring in a bill "for the better discovery and suppression of Bribery and corrupt practices in the Election of members to serve in parliament."

Mr. *Grenfell* said, he could not deny that such an address had been issued by him to the place alluded to; but he did not see that there was anything contained in it which would prevent him from opposing, as he had always done, any innovations, founded upon an undefined speculative plan of parliamentary reform.

Mr. *Wynn* admitted, that it was the duty of the House to oppose, as far as possible, any practices which might tend to defeat the fairness and purity with which elections ought to be conducted. He objected, however, to the proposition of the noble lord to empower a committee in the manner suggested by the noble lord. The manner of forming such a committee might tend to defeat the very end proposed, because it would only secure, that one member (he who presented the petition) in favour of the petitioner should be on the committee. The expenses of the investigation would also form another and

a very serious difficulty. He threw this out, not in hostility to the measure, but as it occurred to him in the shape of an objection on the face of it. On the one hand, if the expenses were to fall on the parties preferring the petition, they would be seldom brought; for few persons would be found willing to bear those expenses for the sake of an investigation, the result of which could in no way benefit themselves. On the other hand, if the expenses should be paid by the public, that circumstance would give occasion to many of what were called fishing petitions, in which the parties depended upon the chance of any evidence they might get, and without any previous authority, or sufficient ground for the proceeding. He also understood the noble lord to state, that the power of appointing the committee was not to be imperative on the House, but optional. He thought this was likely to give rise to very unpleasant discussions, in which the result would often not be so satisfactory as when the whole decision on the election was left to the committee. He hoped that when the noble lord brought in his bill, he would find some means of obviating these difficulties.

Lord *John Russell* said, he intended to propose that the expenses should be paid as in other committees, and that notice of the application should be given to the borough, who would be allowed to oppose by their counsel and agents.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

JAMAICA SLAVES' TRIALS.] Mr. *Denman*, in bringing before the House the motion of which he had given notice on the first day of the present session, begged to premise, that, although the papers upon which that motion was founded, had been ordered on the 1st day of March last year, yet they had not been laid upon the table until a late period of the session, and that he had not had an opportunity of reading them, until some time in the recess. He was well aware how extremely difficult it was to arrest the attention of the House at the present moment of danger and alarm, unless upon some question connected with commercial distress, or the state of the currency; but yet he thought, that the subject to which he was about to implore their consideration, was one in which they could do more good than they had been able to effect in all the protracted discussions upon that truly important, but, unfortunately, ill-understood, matter of inquiry. For as, in the one case, it was difficult to trace the causes of the evils which all felt and acknowledged, and still more difficult to apply a remedy to misfortunes which each succeeding discussion seemed to prove more and more beyond their reach or control; so, in the other, he would be able to show, that they themselves had been the cause of the commission of great crimes, for which they were deeply responsible, and to which it was in their power to apply an instantaneous and effectual remedy. In the one case, they were engaged, night after night, in discussions, which, from their ignorance of the disease or the remedy, could hardly turn to any practical benefit; while, in the other, they could immediately make themselves acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and see that it was in their power to make that knowledge a means of preventing the further commission of deeds disgraceful to the character of the country. This much he would say, that if they did not look upon the case he would submit to them as deeply worthy of their attention, they would prove themselves unfaithful representatives of the people of England, who, in spite of all their distresses and difficulties, he rejoiced to say, had never for one moment lost sight of their suffering fellow-creatures on the other side of the Atlantic, or ceased to feel, with a truly Christian spirit, the horrible state of oppression to which they were subjected.

Considering, then, that judicial oppression was the hardest of all evils to bear by civilized man, and that it had, in the case to which he was about to allude, reached the highest pinnacle of its power —a height, indeed, far beyond any thing they could possibly conceive—he would briefly state the circumstances, which, he hoped, would convince the House of the propriety of their expressing a strong opinion upon the conduct of those who were invested with the power of administering justice to their fellow-creatures. The transactions to which he alluded, occured in Kingston, Jamaica, in December, 1823. He begged to observe in the outset, that what he had to state was wholly contained in the documents laid upon the table by the authority of the House; a course to which he was restricted from his not possessing any other source of information, and which he indeed could not

regret, as he felt convinced he should be able to furnish from them more than sufficient grounds for the prompt interference of parliament. It appeared, that the idea of insurrection, which caused the execution of a certain number of negroes, had its origin in the conversation of an inhabitant of the parish of St. Mary's, in the island of Jamaica, with his negroe boy, on the 16th of December, 1823. That person, named Roberts, a butcher, having occasion to chide his boy for neglecting his person and apparel, received some answers, in exculpation of his negligence, which caused the trial of eight persons, for a pretended conspiracy, in three days after; and a sentence that they should be hanged by the neck till they were dead, to be actually executed on these unhappy men in four days after their condemnation. Every one of them, in that sad moment, denied most strenuously their guilt; and refused, one and all, even on the scaffold, to purchase their safety by any confession which would have involved any others in the alleged crime for which they were about to suffer. The mode in which the conspiracy was said to be discovered, was this—"On Monday, the 16th December, the butcher, Roberts, scolded his negroe boy, William Stirling, for not getting his frocks, and asked him how he would appear to follow him about at Christmas? William said, 'Massa, you will have bad Christmas.' Witness said, for what? are the negroes a going to rise? He said, yes, his father told him so. Witness asked him if he had seen the negroes meeting; he said, yes, two times; but that his father told him more than he knew at the meeting. Witness asked him if any of his negroes were among them; he said, he believed George was. Witness asked, if any more Bay negroes; he said, yes, Mr. Walker's Ned and Douglas. Witness asked, if he thought they were going to kill all the Buckrahs (Whites); said, his father told him so. Witness then asked him what he must do; should he go to Kingston or Spanish-town? He answered, no; negroes would walk all about the country. Witness asked, if he should pack up his books and go to the fort, or Mr. Beard's, would he be safe? He said, no; negroes would walk all about, and Wentworth negroes would rise the same as Frontier. Witness asked if they would kill every body? He answered, yes, every body; and advised witness and captain Barton to go on board of ship, and take him with them; would not be safe any where else."—So they would find, that the whole charge rested upon the evidence, scarcely supported in any one instance, by a boy who had trumped up a story to save himself from correction. They would even see that the master had led the way in every question, and had actually put into the boy's mouth what he should say; and that he did say all this on the leading of the master could not be considered very extraordinary, when it presented such a good opportunity of diverting the attention of the master from the boy's negligence, to the master's personal safety. If the boy had been, in the first instance, taken before a magistrate, and examined with proper judicial inquiry, the case would have been different; but they would find, that without any step of that kind, the authorities proceeded to take precautions for their security. With any of these precautions he did not mean to find fault. If they dreaded an insurrection of the negroes, nothing was more politic than to shew, by the sight of an overwhelming force of grenadiers and of Windward Browns, and corps of light infantry, how hopeless any such attempt must prove on the part of the negroes. Nothing could be more proper if apprehension existed; but still he should have conceived it necessary to have had a solemn investigation of all the circumstances before a magistrate, and have examined the persons accused separately, so as to have seen how far their tales varied from each other, and in what circumstances the story of the boy could have been supported. The boy, when at last taken before the magistrate, repeated his childish story with an addition, very like what a boy would make who wished to have his evidence thought more impressive, that he saw them flourish cutlasses. And upon this evidence, without any other proceedings, without a previous examination of the unhappy accused before a magistrate, or any attempt to confront them with their accuser, were these individuals in three days brought to trial. Nothing was done in the way of previous examination to avert the possibility of falsehood, or save the authorities from the charge of unnecessary bloodshed. They were apprehended on the 16th, on the 19th they were brought to trial. The boy, upon being examined on the trial, repeated the story he had told his master, adding some circumstances for the purpose of confirming and explaining that which

was before only general. It appeared by the papers he had alluded to, that the boy stated, that "his father, James Sterling, told him that the negroes were going to rise, and that he, witness, must keep himself away or he would get hurted; and he advised his master to go on board of a ship. His master asked him if he went to the fort, or to Mr. Beard's, would he be safe? Witness said no, that he must go on board a ship, as the negroes were going to rise, and walk all about, and murder every body. After his father had told him this, he went to Frontier to see him there; saw the prisoner and other negroes; they were talking, but he did not hear what they said; some of them were flourishing cutlasses, as if they would cut off some person's head; he, witness, was then near them (about three yards); there were a number of men, and some women among them; saw Ned and Douglas there. Another evening, going to his father, he saw them again; they were flourishing cutlasses, and said they would go on Port Maria Bay at Christmas fall; he did not see prisoner that night" Although there were many other individuals mentioned who might have been examined, and who could have vouched for it if it was true, only one was brought before the magistrates, who on the 16th of December instituted the preliminary inquiry. This witness was Ned, the slave mentioned by the boy, and he finding that he would be implicated in the accusation made by the boy if he should attempt to contradict it, confirmed the statement as to the meeting of the slaves. Being examined he deposed—"That he was present at a meeting about ten days ago, held at the bridge near Frontier estate, and heard a consultation respecting which way they were to act; that they intended to have risen at Christmas fall, but in consequence of the appointment of guards, they changed the day for the day after the full of the moon, Thursday night next, the 18th instant, when they thought it would be full. That the intention was then to burn the trash house and works at Frontier estate, and when the white people came to quench it, they would then destroy them; after which they were to begin at the top (the east) of the bay, and set fire to the buildings, when a general massacre was to take place: that it was to be general throughout the parish at the same time, and that the negroes before mentioned, belonging to Frontier estate, were the most prominent persons that he knew of at the meetings."

On the evidence of these two young boys, eight individuals were deprived of life. The boy Douglas appeared to have been disposed of in a most extraordinary manner. He had a right to infer, that he had been put on board ship only because it had been discovered that he could give no evidence which could implicate any individual. The accused persons were all tried on the 19th of December. First came Charles Brown. It was not unimportant to remark, that this individual had been an overseer, and had conducted himself with great severity to the slaves, particularly the women. If, therefore, any individual was wanted to fill up the dramatis personæ of the plot, this Charles Brown was the person whom the intemperate imagination of the boys was most likely to fix upon to supply the omission. The proofs of guilt against this slave were very trifling; indeed there was little to affect him. The next persons tried were William Montgomery, and four others. The evidence against these were as slight as that given in the former case.

The next case it was impossible for any person to contemplate without a good deal of emotion. It was the case of James Sterling, the father of the boy William, who, in order to escape the punishment which he anticipated for not having done what was expected of him, had given the first information which formed the foundation of these horrid transactions. The first witness against the boy William's father was the boy Ned. He being admonished to speak the truth, said he knew the prisoner. He was not sworn to give evidence: on none of the trials were the boys sworn to give evidence. The boy William was then called to give evidence against his father. Being admonished to speak the truth, he said "he went to his father's (the prisoner's) house, who told him the negroes were going to rise, and he, witness, must take care of himself, and keep out of the way, in case he should be hurt, because they would kill every body. His master asked him if he thought the negroes would rise? He told him 'Yes.' He asked him if he thought the negroes would kill him (his master)? He said, he did not think so, but advised him to go on board the ship." His master asked him if he would not be safe if he went to the fort or to Mr. Beard's? He, witness, said no; he had better go

on board of ship, as the negroes were to walk all about. Did not see his father among the negroes; when Ned was with him, there were men and women; the men had a number of cutlasses flourishing."—"The prisoner in his defence, said, he thought his son William was a runaway, and scolded him; he, prisoner, always attended his work; his master always supplied him with clothes and victuals, as he was an old man."—"The jury found him guilty, and the court passed the following sentence:—That you James Sterling, be hanged by the neck until you are dead. You will now be taken from hence to some safe and secure place of confinement, there to remain until the pleasure of the governor is known, at what time and place you are to be executed."—This sentence was subsequently carried into effect. There were these remarkable circumstances of difference between the evidence of Ned, a slave of James Walker, esq. who only speaks of having seen the negroes upon one occasion. On that occasion William was with him, and he says, that "his father was not then among the negroes." Neither upon the trial, nor on the previous examination, was William sworn; yet was the law permitted to take its course against the father, in the manner he had described.

The other case to which he intended to advert, and which every man must feel to be a most painful and distressing one, was that of Henry Nibbs, who was arraigned under the same charge, and who wa convicted on the evidence of his wife. Ann Nibbs was the first witness examined —"Ann Nibbs, a free person of colour, says she knows prisoner, who lives in Mr. White's yard; in the middle of the night of Thursday last, heard some person in prisoner's room strike a light; saw a man belonging to Frontier going into prisoner's house, and when going away, on seeing Mr. Merrilees, he appeared frightened." Another witness Mary, his wife, says—"She is a native of St. Domingo, knows prisoner, is his wife; knows Charles Watson, who belongs to Frontier, has often seen him with prisoner, who often goes to Frontier; prisoner had three guns when living at Port Maria Bay, once left one at Mahoe Bay; he brought two guns when he removed to Manning's town, and gave one to James Sterling, and one to Charles Watson." Her evidence went to state a detailed conversation, which she asserted that she overheard; but he protested against a husband being placed at the mercy of a wife, to take advantage of every vague expression which, in the familiar intercourse between man and wife, she might hear, and put whatever construction she pleased upon it.

Thus, these eight men were tried and executed, upon charges which, he would not hesitate to say, in no satisfactory way whatever went to establish the existence of a rebellious conspiracy. Witnesses were not examined who might and ought to have been called; and, in the examination even of those who were called, many contradictions were to be found. He would, as an instance of this contradictory testimony, advert to the evidence of Mary and Ned, on the trial of James Sterling. Ned said, when he met the negroes talking bad words, he asked them if they did not hear that guard was to be kept at Christmas, the day previous to the 26th, the day said to be fixed for the breaking out of the rebellious conspiracy? Upon his suggestion they changed the day to the 18th. He said, that this conversation took place on Saturday, about eight o'clock in the evening; but this could not be: and this could not be the cause of the charge, if what Mary said was true, as she said that, on the preceding Friday, she heard that the rising would take place on Wednesday or Thursday, as the guards were fixed for Christmas. Many similar instances might be pointed out in the course of the evidence. The account of the execution was communicated in the following letter to Mr. Bullock, the duke of Manchester's secretary:—

"Industry, December 25, 1823.—Dear Sir; I have to acquaint you, for the information of his grace, that the eight negroes were executed yesterday, with all due solemnity and decorum, attended by the custos and several magistrates, four companies of St. Mary's regiment, and a troop of horse; only one of the wretches confessed to the rev. Mr. Girord, that it was their intention to have burnt Frontier works and Port Maria, and kill the whites; but none would mention any other negroes concerned with them, or shew any symptom of religion or repentance. They all declared they would die like men, and met their fate with perfect indifference, and one laughed at the clergyman, Mr. Cook, when he attempted to exhort him under the gallows.* Every thing is at present perfectly tranquil;

three companies are on duty in different parts of the parish.—Your's, &c. H. Cox."

In a previous letter of colonel Cox to the secretary, he states, to shew the anxiety for having the trial of these unfortunate negroes expedited, "I thought it my duty to insist on the magistrates trying the negroes that had been taken immediately, and to send their trial and sentence, by express, as it will, in my opinion, be highly important for the safety of the parish, and probably for the island, that they should be executed before the holidays, as an example to the other negroes, and to prevent the danger of an escape, or an attempt to release them." In another part of the same letter he states, "I have issued orders to apprehend every negro against whom there is the least suspicion, and shall proceed to try all or any of them as soon as I think I have sufficient evidence to convict them." So here was a gentleman writing to the secretary, anticipating the conviction of these men on whose cases he was about to sit in the capacity of a judge. He suggests their conviction and execution, not for justice sake, not on the ground of their guilt, or any evidence preferred against them, but that their execution might be an example to the whole island. He would ask if it was on such a report as this that the governor ought to have acted, was it on such evidence as he had referred to, that the conviction of eight human beings, and their subsequent execution, should have taken place; an execution which colonel Cox states, in the letter of the 25th of December, to have been gone through "with all due solemnity and decorum?" The hon. and learned gentleman proceeded to advert to the correspondence of colonel Cox with the secretary, and felt satisfied that the House would feel how cruel was the course adopted towards these eight prisoners, who thus underwent the severest sentence of the law, without the opportunity of a full and fair investigation —without counsel—without witnesses being called, who could establish their evidence, and without the usual forms and modes of criminal justice observed in this country. It was the duty of the House to interpose, and to prevent persons in future, whether slaves or not, from falling the victims of perverted evidence, of ignorance, and of passion, which tended not less to the punishment of innocence, than to the impunity of guilt.

He would now proceed to notice the trials which had taken place in other parts of the island. There appeared to be a taste for plots in Jamaica, so numerous were the charges of conspiracy, and so slight was the foundation for them. At St. James's, a great number of negroes were convicted of conspiracy; but the duke of Manchester was so satisfied of the ridiculous nature of the charge, that he commuted the sentence of transportation for life to imprisonment for three months. The whole affair, it appeared, originated in the idle conversation of a lame boy about "king Wilberforce." The duke of Manchester declared that, after reading over the whole of the evidence, he had not been able to discover any combination amongst the negroes for any criminal purpose. The next case of alleged conspiracy occurred at St. George's. In this case a slave named Corberand, who might in some respects be compared to Titus Oates, was the principal evidence. This man was examined on the 26th of December, and stated nothing that could in any degree support a charge of conspiracy. On the 7th of January, however, another slave, named Mack, came into play, and stated various particulars. Corberand then, finding that there was a demand for a plot, came out with the following deposition, equal to any that Oates imposed upon the credulity of the English nation.

"Buff Bay, Court-house, Dec. 26, 1823," Jamaica, ss. St. George.—The examination of Jean Baptiste Corberand, of Mullett Hall plantation, sworn:—Saith, that some time before the death of Mr. M'Farlane, late overseer of Balcarras, he understood that the negroes of that property were mustering by night; and one night being in one of the negro houses, and hearing a noise, was induced to go and see what it was; that he found a large concourse of negroes in Richard Montagnac's house, which was called the Court-house, and inquiring what they were about, they asked him if he would be a clerk, and he said he would; that he thereupon asked them what were his duties, which they refused to explain to him; from thence they marched to James Thompson's house (who was called the king) in military order; escorting Dennis Kerr (who was called the governor); that Thompson then gave them all some refreshment; they were discoursing one with another; but deponent did not un-

derstand what they were talking about, and after some time left them. Deponent further saith, that he went again the night after, accompanied by his brother, to James Thompson's house, and found the people mustering in the same manner as they did the night before; that they offered to make his brother second governor, which offended deponent, who thought it was not right that his younger brother should be put above him; that not being able to obtain any information from them, he did not afterwards return. Further this deponent saith not."

The House would observe, that the closing words of the deposition, which contained no matter of charge of rebellion, were—"Further the deponent sayeth not;" yet although he had closed his deposition in this way—finding there was a great demand for plots—and a great encouragement given for the supply of them, he added a great many things, which he would not otherwise have thought of. Fortunately, however, he was detected, by having endeavoured to implicate Lecesne (whose case had been already before the House) in the rebellious conspiracy, which was, however, satisfactorily refuted by the equally satisfactory circumstances of his being, for a greater portion of the time, off the island; and for the other part of the time, confined in prison, except for a very short period, during which he clearly shewed that he could have taken no part in the alleged conspiracy. A sufficient proof of the infamous character of these witnesses was to be found in the following recommendation of the secret committee of the assembly, that Charles Mack and Jean Baptiste should be sent off the island as persons of too dangerous a character to remain at large in the colony. The hon. and learned gentleman proceeded to advert to the gross perjuries of Corberand, who ought to have been prosecuted and severely punished, for having deposed, on the 26th of December, that he knew nothing of a rebellious conspiracy, and afterwards having hatched a plot, with all the circumstances of unlawful oaths and murderous purposes.

The other place in which an insurrectionary spirit was said to be manifested, was the Hanover estate; and there the disturbances by no means partook of the character of a general discontent. It arose from the abridgment of a holiday which the slaves were generally permitted to enjoy. From the refusal of allowing them to enjoy this festival, a spirit of dissatisfaction arose, which it was attempted to convert into an insurrectionary movement. This occurred, however, in the month of July, long before the general spirit of rebellion was said to have broken out; and, although trials and convictions had taken place, nothing appeared to justify the suspicion that the discontent at Hanover was one that partook of the nature of a rebellion or conspiracy against the white population of the island.

He had now gone through four cases —to which he might easily add many more—shewing the very objectionable and unjust manner in which criminal justice was executed in the West Indies. In all the cases to which he had adverted, the convictions, twenty-three of which were followed by execution, were founded, almost exclusively, on the evidence of the slaves, and therefore of persons who knew not the sacred nature of an oath, and all the important obligations of justice. And this brought him to a subject which last night had occupied the attention of the House; namely the admissibility of the evidence of slaves in courts of justice. A motion upon that subject had been brought forward in the House of Assembly, and rejected by a large majority; and the manner in which it was discussed, and the very large majority that divided against it, satisfied him that the discussion was entertained, but with no very great likelihood of a different conclusion being, at any near period of time, adopted. The motion was introduced by Mr. Stuart, the Custos of Trelawney, who certainly stated a very strong case in favour of it. Among other cases which he stated, was the very distressing and inhuman one of a female slave, whose head was twisted off, and a conviction and subsequent punishment did not take place—not because there was any doubt that the atrocious deed had been done, but because, although several persons had seen it, yet the evidence of those persons was not legal. He also stated another case of a very atrocious nature. It was that of a female who was locked up in a room, and who was most cruelly branded and disfigured with a marking-iron, used for branding sheep and cattle. This person would have escaped with impunity, had it not been for the accidental circumstance of a young man of colour, who saw the

smoke issuing from the window, and who saw the cruel act perpetrated through a crevice in the wall. He was in this manner detected, convicted, and punished. Another case was mentioned in the course of the same discussion by Mr. Mais. He spoke as follows:—"There is one instance which, because of recent occurrence, I must take leave to mention. It is the case of a female slave, who, on her return home, was met by a free man of colour, who had been out shooting. A little dog, which accompanied her, barked, and probably might have snapped at the man. This irritated him, and he threatened to shoot the dog; the woman, alarmed for his safety, called out, 'Oh! don't shoot him; don't shoot my dog'; upon which the man turned angrily upon her, and said, 'Not shoot him? I'll shoot you if you say much,' and with little ceremony, lodged the contents of his piece in her side. This was in the face of day, in the presence of many persons, but who, being slaves, were not qualified to give testimony on the occasion. This was a damning fact, and yet the offender escaped. Shall it be said, then, that such a provision as is now sought for is not necessary?"

There was, he admitted, much weight in the objections which were urged against the measure. It was argued, and he felt the force of the argument, that there were persons in this, the mother country, who were as insensible to the obligations of an oath as the slaves in the West Indies. This might be true to a certain extent; but the forms of Christianity, the religious education, and the moral habits of the people here, independent of their free condition, operated as a check and a restraint against so great a prevalence of perjury. It was, he was aware, very difficult to say in what cases, and under what circumstances, slave evidence ought to be admitted. The right hon. Secretary (Mr. Canning) had pointed out in a speech attributed to him, the requisite qualifications for the admissibility of slave evidence. He first proposes that the slave should be convinced of the truth of Christianity—that he should have a fellow-feeling for his brother-man—and that he should be, in various other ways, duly qualified to have his evidence received, in cases affecting white-persons. To him (Mr. D.) the strongest argument in favour of the admissibility of that evidence, was, that a greater security would be given to the property and persons of the White population, from a greater inducement being thereby given to the majority to observe peace and order, which would be effected by this approach to the level of their own condition. At the same time that great difficulty presented itself, he thought the whole secret was developed in the sentiments delivered by Mr. Hislop, who, at the same time that he expressed himself in some parts of his speech favourable to the admission of those rights to which a progressive improvement would entitle them, yet put this very striking case, namely, what was to be expected from persons, who, as soon as they have given evidence in a court of justice on the life of a fellow-creature—as soon as they came out of the court-house—might be sent to the work-house at the caprice of their master to receive a flogging? Between these two extremes, how was it expected they would act? The moral influence, which would induce them to speak the truth would be quite neutralized and overcome by the terror which they would feel themselves under. Bodily fear would predominate over a sense of mental propriety and duty and, as long as the slave was placed in a relation which filled his mind with fear, it was in vain to expect from him a free, impartial and uninfluenced disclosure of all he knew. A human being in that situation might be said, in a manner, to be ready to depose or declare any thing—to be a victim of terror, and to surrender his faculties altogether to the guidance and regulation of his master. It was upon such evidence that the persons whose cases he had cited had been condemned. Under such circumstances, he might be asked, what was his remedy? He was free to confess he knew but of one—one just in principle, effective in practice, and simple in operation—the extinction of slavery [hear, hear!] There could be no other remedy. It might be that this could not be effected immediately, that it should be brought about gradually, and that religious instruction should prepare the way for the emancipation of the negroes. Persons had gone to them to diffuse this religious instruction, and he hoped it would have all the beneficial effect that was expected and intended to flow from it. But the extinction of slavery must be the object at which they must arrive, before they could hope to place the white population in that state of security, and the negro

population in that state of comfort, which the interests and the happiness of both required. But how could the christian religion be taught to these blacks by their owners, with any degree of consistency, or with any prospect of success? Would not the slave naturally say to his instructor, "you tell me that God is no respecter of persons; that he is equally the Creator of us all; and that we are equally inheritors of eternal life; you teach me that the great injunction of Christ to his followers, is, 'do unto others as you would be done by;' I suspect your whole system; for, in spite of all this doctrine, precept and exhortation, you call me your slave, and tell me that you own me as your property." Could Christianity make any progress when taught by such instructors, and under such circumstances? It was utterly false that these unfortunate beings were indifferent to religion: they died full of repentance for their own sins, and imploring the mercy of their God. Such men must reject the whole fabric of Christianity, on account of those by whom it was taught to them, they must say, "our masters are by their own religion so condemned and denounced, that it is a moral degradation to hold any communion with them."

These were the circumstances under which he had felt it to be his duty to bring this subject before the House. When he spoke of the abolition of slavery, he trusted that the House would not imagine that he was the advocate of hasty measures; but he thought his majesty's ministers should always bear in mind, that the abolition of slavery was the goal; that, considering the interests of individuals, this object should be made the ground of their measures. It was of the highest importance that the people of England should be fully informed of what was passing in their colonies; and this was one of his motives for bringing this subject forward. He would now move,

"That this House, having taken into their consideration the accounts laid before them of the judicial proceedings in Jamaica on the trials of slaves for rebellious conspiracy and other offences, in the years 1823 and 1824, deem it their duty to express, in the strongest terms, the sorrow and indignation with which they contemplate the perversions of law, and violations of justice, displayed in those trials; they deeply lament the precipitation with which sentence of death, wholly unwarranted by proof, was in several instances carried into execution, and they cannot refrain from declaring their conviction of the necessity of an immediate and effectual reform in the administration of criminal justice affecting slaves in that island."

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, that the hon. and learned gentleman who had just sat down, had concluded his speech with observations which, though they very naturally grew out of the subject, were not, however, necessarily connected with the question more immediately under consideration. Though he did not feel himself called upon to follow the hon. and learned gentleman in these observations, he trusted that neither he nor the House would, on that account, conclude that he felt less interested in the subject, or was less anxious to see the intentions of government and of the House carried into effect, for the amelioration of the condition of slaves, and the final extinction of slavery itself. Though fully prepared to concur with him in all he had said with respect to the great evils inseparable from slavery, and the only effectual cure for those evils, he would not detain the House by entering into these questions. He must, however, guard the House against the impression which might be produced by some observations which had fallen from the hon. and learned gentleman; particularly that in which it was asserted, that the law had been corruptly violated. He would undertake to convince the House, by a plain statement of facts, that the duke of Manchester and the public authorities must have felt convinced, by what had occurred among the slaves in the northern districts of Jamaica, that rebellious intentions existed among them. The proof that such was the impression on the mind of the duke of Manchester, was to be found in the demands he made for additional troops, and his preparations to meet the danger which circumstances induced him to believe threatened the island. It must be recollected that he, as governor, was intrusted with the protection and superintendance of a place peculiarly situated, where the disproportion was so great between the whites and the slave population, and where, of course, the apprehension of any rebellious or insurrectionary movement ought to have inspired the greatest caution. There was every reason to believe that the slaves, in the northern parts of the island, had been influenced in their

conduct by an idea, that the intentions of government in their favour were frustrated by the unwillingness of their owners to comply with instructions supposed to have been sent out. He was prepared to maintain, in opposition to what had fallen from the hon. and learned gentleman, that in St. George's and St. Mary's there were indications among the slaves of a rebellious conspiracy. In St. George's, the confessions of the slave, Black Jack, who could have had no motive for asserting falsehooods, would be sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced mind, that designs of a dangerous nature were in contemplation. This slave, it should be remembered, could expect nothing from any discoveries he might make; for he could not, at the time, entertain the least hope of freedom. At a later period, there was evidence of rebellion among the negroes of Mr. Vanborough. Now with respect to St. Mary's he would ask the hon. and learned gentleman, whether there was any thing irregular in the proceedings there? Was he aware of the state of the law? And, however desirable an alteration in that law might be, however severe it was, however greatly to be lamented, the state of things under which it could for a moment be judged necessary, still, if the proceedings which had taken place, were conformable to it, were they now to censure those, who, having no other rule to guide them in their legal decisions, felt themselves under the necessity of acting upon its provisions? He did not stand up as the advocate of that law. He did not mean to defend the justice or wisdom of it. That was another question. What they had to decide upon was the conduct of those who acted under it. However desirable an alteration might be, if it existed at the time those trials took place, the conduct of the court could not, with any thing like justice or fairness, be attacked, however deserving the law itself might be of reprobation. These were some of its enactments. The forty-sixth section provided "That if any slave or slaves shall, after the commencement of this act, enter into or be concerned in any rebellion or rebellious conspiracy, or commit any murder, felony, burglary, robbery, or set fire to any houses, out-houses, negro-houses, cane-pieces, grass or corn pieces, or break into such houses, out-houses, or negro-houses, in the day time, no person being therein, and steal therebut, or compass or imagine the death of any white person, and declare the same by some overt act, or commit any other crime which would subject white persons or persons of free condition to be indicted for felony, such slave or slaves shall for every such offence or offences, upon trial and conviction thereof in manner hereinafter mentioned, suffer death, transportation, or such other punishment as the court shall think proper to direct, according to the nature and extent of the offence."—By the forty-eighth section, it was enacted, "That if any slave or slaves shall hereafter be found to have in his, her, or their custody or possession any fire arms, pikes, sabres, swords, cutlasses, lances, gunpowder, slugs, or ball, without the knowledge of his, her or their overseer, such slave or slaves shall be taken before two magistrates, who shall, if they are of opinion that the same was with evil intent, commit such slave or slaves to the gaol, to be tried by a slave court, as hereinafter directed; and, upon conviction, the said slave or slaves shall suffer death, transportation, or such other punishment as the court shall think proper to direct."

The hon. and learned gentleman, in the course of his speech, had said, that no act had been proved, on the trials, which subjected any of these unfortunate slaves to the penalty of death. Now, was it not proved by the woman, Mary, that she saw a slave with a gun and bayonet in his possession, and also some powder and ball? The powder and ball were found by the officer who searched the place where she said they were concealed in a basket. Here was an act, which, by the law, subjected the person so offending to the punishment of death. If such was the case, it was surely the law they had to blame, and not the persons whose business it was to administer it.

Mr. *Denman*—That is not the charge.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* proceeded.—The last clause of the act was still more severe and sweeping than any to which he had yet referred; for it provided that, "whereas it is necessary to prevent the secret meetings of slaves, and their administering of oaths at such meetings, by drinking of rum mixed with gunpowder, &c. Be it further enacted, that all persons found guilty of the same shall suffer death or transportation for life, as the court may direct."—As a commentary on what had fallen from the hon. and learned gentleman with respect to the evils inseparable from slavery, he might say that the act,

the provisions of which appeared so severe, was actually an amendment of another act, passed in the year 1750. Laws of this kind were a dreadful proof of the state society must assume in those countries where slavery existed; of the terrors it must naturally excite in the minds of the ruling, but the far less numerous, portion of the population, and the necessity they consider themselves under of guarding against the dangers of insurrection, by excessive severity of the laws. An individual who belonged to the office with which he was connected, and who was, he believed, as meritorious a public officer as lived, Mr. Stephen, the son of the master in chancery, in a commentary on the act of 1817, observed, that it contained many beneficial clauses for the slaves. If, therefore, however severe it might appear in its enactments, it had not been agreed to by that House, the act of 1750 must still have remained in force, and the slaves would be deprived of the advantages of these clauses.

The hon. and learned gentleman said, that not one of those who suffered acknowledged the justice of the sentence, or made any confession of guilt. Now, he begged to refer him to page 44, where Mr. Cox states, that "one of the wretches confessed to the rev. Mr. Girod, that it was their intention to have burnt Frontier Works and Port Maria, and killed the whites." The hon. and learned gentleman endeavoured to hold up Mr. Cox as a person divested of all sense of humanity, and disposed to treat the negroes with the utmost severity. He believed there was not in the island a more worthy, estimable, or humane man than Mr. Cox. It so happened, that this very gentleman was the person who proposed the clause for depriving the slave court of the power of passing sentence of death, and ordering the slave for immediate execution. Had it not been for him, the magistrates would have the power of directing immediate punishment, without any reference to the executive. With respect to his letter, dated December 25, 1823, he saw nothing in it to condemn—nothing exceptionable, except the use of the word "wretches," which no doubt was inadvertently used, and was perhaps in some measure excusable, considering the circumstances under which it was written. A more benevolent or humane man did not exist, or one who entertained more kind feelings towards the slaves than Mr. Cox. This praise he did not bestow lightly or inadvertently. He had the very best authority for entertaining that opinion of him. If Mr. Cox had reason to be convinced that the slaves on his estate had entered into a conspiracy to burn and destroy his property—to take away the life of himself, his wife, and his family, at the very moment when they were receiving at his hands the most kind treatment—it was not greatly to be wondered at, that he should have felt somewhat irritated, and under the influence of such feelings, made use of language which, in his cooler moments, he would not have employed. The good he had done should not be entirely neutralized by the use of that single word, "wretches."

The hon. and learned gentleman had said, that the trials at St. Mary's were got up entirely upon the evidence of a boy named William, who had been scolded by his master. It was impossible that such an hypothesis as this could be, for a moment, sustained by any person who had read the whole of the evidence with attention. The boy, on his first examination, named his father as one of the conspirators; but denied after that his father had been concerned. He did not mean to defend that state of the law which admitted of the evidence given; but if the law of the island was such, however desirable improvement might be, could they with justice cast blame on those who acted under it, who had no other rule of conduct, and who, from the nature of the circumstances, were placed under the painful necessity of taking measures to put down the danger which they apprehended, and which indeed had been proved to exist? To account for the conduct and feelings of the colonists, gentlemen must go back to the period when the slave population was very different, in every respect, to what it was at present. Indeed, there was nothing which appeared to him so extraordinary in the whole conduct of the planters, as their not perceiving, the change which had within some years taken place in the situation of the slave, their not perceiving that circumstances were now very different from those of the time when large numbers of the population of Africa were, every year, dragged from their homes, landed on the West-India islands, after all the miseries of a voyage which must naturally have filled them with thoughts of vengeance, and

immediately placed under a system of restraint, from which they must have naturally been eager to free themselves. Compared to these the slave population of the present day were humanized and intelligent, and required a different sort of management. The hon. and learned gentleman had said, that manumission and money were the rewards held out to the witnesses for conviction. Upon this he had only to observe, that it was expressly denied by the duke of Manchester. The hon. and learned gentleman referred to the debates which took place in the assembly of Jamaica, in which some of the members spoke of the utter incompetency of the slaves to appear as witnesses, from a total ignorance of the nature of moral restraint, and the solemn obligation of an oath. It was with a view to their moral and religious improvement that a special provision had been inserted in the order in council, containing a restriction as to the time, and specifying certain conditions, on which only the evidence of the slave could be admissible against a white man.

With respect to the practical part of this important question, the hon. and learned gentleman must be aware, that there was at present a legal commission in Jamaica, one of whose instructions it was, to direct their attention to this subject. The distinction he had been anxious to draw was, between that state of the law which was practically objectionable, and the conduct of those whose duty it was to apply the law to such cases as might come before them. Before they condemned they must look at the animus of the parties. Now, was the House to believe, could any person acquainted with human nature suppose for a moment, that Mr. Cox would sacrifice his slaves, destroy his own property, merely for the purpose of gratifying some angry feelings? It appeared utterly improbable that any man in his senses could act in such a manner. He felt persuaded that Mr. Cox knew the evidence was sufficient to produce conviction; that he was thoroughly persuaded of the guilt of the parties, and that feeling that, he communicated his apprehensions to the duke of Manchester. But, what was the situation of the duke of Manchester himself? He had information from a hundred various sources of the state of feeling among the slaves, and of the apprehensions entertained that a conspiracy was in progress. But, said the hon. and learned gentleman, even admitting all this, the proceedings were too summary. What better course could have been pursued, at such a crisis, than by a timely act of severity to prevent further mischief? What motive could Mr. Cox have for the conduct he pursued, but to do the best he could for the safety of himself and those similarly circumstanced?

With respect to the trials at St. Mary's, and the force of the evidence given upon the occasion, every person who had ever attended a trial must admit, that the jury were influenced by many circumstances which it was utterly impossible to put upon paper; the countenance, for example, of the witness, the tone and manner in which he answered some questions. With all these circumstances it was impossible that those who merely saw the account in a printed form could be acquainted. In addition to this, the duke of Manchester said, that the trials were most scandalously reported, and that throughout, there was the greatest incorrectness. These observations he threw out, just to remind the House, that the evidence which they had an opportunity of consulting was not that on which the court and the jury decided. The blame of introducing the evidence of negroes was to be visited on the law, and not upon those whose duty it was to administer it.

With respect to the trials at St. George's, the confession of Jack was quite sufficient to shew what the intentions of the negroes were. He said, that bad usage had driven him to his crown; that James Manhertz brought up thirty-six guns, in three turns, each turn he had two mules, on each mule six guns. Corberand then brought up a keg of powder, and carried it to Oliver's house. Oliver then said, it would not do to hide the kegs and powder in Balcarres. He would hide the guns, but Corberand must carry the powder to Mullet-hall, and there hide it. Jack here invoked the Almighty, and the Bible. Oliver, Corberand, and John Braeme, resolved on hiding, and that nobody else should know, lest, if they quarrelled, they might tell. The ensuing Saturday was appointed to hide the guns and powder. Then they hid the guns at Balcarres, and powder at Mullet-hall. Corberand told the negroes at Balcarres, before the guns were hid, "that the reason why the English negroes never succeeded in their revolt was, because they had not the heart

same as French negroes. When the French negroes fought, they did not mind being killed. They were killed plenty, and they killed buckras." Here was quite sufficient to show that such acts had been committed as, under the existing state of the law, were punishable with death. It had been observed, that the rebellion which broke out in July, was not proof that it was not contemplated in December. It was, however, a strong circumstance to shew that such feelings were about the time, prevalent in the minds of the negroes.

The hon. and learned gentleman had said, that with respect to what took place at Hanover, the slaves were driven to it by ill usage, having been deprived of a day, on which they had been in the habit of being freed from labour. He did not mean to contend that this was a judicious act; but at Golden Grove and Alexandria the slaves made common cause with the others. The conclusion naturally to be drawn was, that their conduct arose from an impression produced on their minds, that they had been ill-treated, and that injustice had been done them. For these evils, which every person must lament, there was no cure but the progressive improvement of the slaves. In proportion as that advanced; in proportion as their faculties were improved, and they came to know their true interests, and the views that were entertained with respect to them, in the same proportion would the apprehensions of their owners be diminished, and the slaves themselves be placed beyond the reach of being influenced in their conduct by groundless motives. There never was a system of slavery in which calamitous differences must not, of necessity, occasionally arise between the master and the slave.

He must oppose the resolution, because he conceived that consequences might follow from it immeasurably more mischievous than any which could be produced by what had occurred, in which, be it recollected, no law had been violated. The duke of Manchester was prevented from interfering, not from want of sympathy with the slave; but, in the responsible, and delicate situation which he filled, intrusted with the government of the island, he felt that some example was necessary; and that, by a timely act of severity, scenes of robbery and bloodshed might be prevented. In his opinion, under all the circumstances, the wisest course would be, to avoid every thing which could at all tend to stir up feelings of animosity on both sides, and to excite such exasperation as might eventually prove injurious to the slaves themselves. The House should consider whether, if substantial justice had been done, the examples made were not calculated, however the necessity might be deplored, to prevent the most serious calamities. Even in this country, where the state of society was different, he would ask, whether it did not sometimes happen that men were punished with the utmost rigour of the law, for crimes which, under different circumstances, a lesser punishment would be deemed sufficient. The duke of Manchester acted on a similar principle. The object was, by striking a salutary terror, before the mischief had got head, to prevent the calamitous consequences that might have followed. With respect to the proceedings at St. Mary's, his hon. and learned friend the Attorney-general, was more competent than himself to answer the hon. and learned gentleman, and therefore he should leave that part of the subject to him. The case of St. George's was quite analogous to that of Hanover. With respect to the contradictions of Corberand, they were not sufficient to show that he did not speak truth in the first instance; but at all events, the question was whether the jury believed him or not. In the three cases he endeavoured to show that rebellious proceedings had taken place; that whatever the state of the law might be, it was strictly followed; and that the punishment took place in conformity to its enactments. These were the grounds on which he maintained that the motion ought not to be agreed to. It had been said, that this was all idle panic, and that there was no occasion to take such severe and sudden steps for putting down the insurrection. Gentlemen were not, perhaps, fully aware of the extent of the horrors excited in the minds of the white population, when an event of this nature was apprehended, and the dreadful consequences that must follow from an attempt of the kind, in which the actors were slaves whose minds were prepared for committing, without remorse or pity, the most frightful outrages. He would not attempt to draw the picture. No language that he could use would be sufficiently strong; but he would quote a passage from a writer who described the re-

sults of such an insurrection in words sufficient to strike terror into the most resolute mind: "It is, indeed, no common fate to which the European settlements in the Charibean Sea will be left. Hordes of blood-thirsty savages, intimately acquainted with every corner of the planter's house, every retreat into which his family may be driven, every crevice in the whole country, mad with unnatural rage against all that deviates from the sable hue of their own ferocious brethren; pouring over every spot where European life exists; scattering on all sides, not destruction, for that would be mildness, but every exquisite form of ingenious torment, only stopping in moments of satiety to lay aside the sword for the torch, and in the intervals of mercy alone exchanging torture for murder: marching against the parent with the transfixed body of his butchered infant as a standard; sacrificing the weaker sex to their brutal lust, amidst the expiring bodies of husbands and kinsmen; and enacting other deeds of such complicated horror, that it is not permitted to the pen of a European to describe or to name them. These are a few features of the picture which wretched eye-witnesses have given us of negro warfare."*

This picture was true in former times, but he did not mean to assert that it was so now. He merely cited it to show the nature of those consequences which tended to justify, in some measure, the alarm felt by the white population, when any thing like rebellion showed itself among the slaves. It was only in their own mental improvement that the slaves could look for an effectual amelioration of their condition. Such being his sentiments, he would propose the following amendment:—

"That this House sees in the proceedings which have been brought under its consideration, with respect to the late Trials of Slaves in Jamaica, further proof of the evils inseparably attendant upon a state of Slavery, and derives therefrom increased conviction of the propriety of the Resolutions passed by this House on the 15th of May, 1823—But, that however desirable it is that the law under which the late Trials took place, should be amended, it does not appear to this House to be expedient or safe to impeach sentences passed by a competent tribunal upon persons brought to trial according to law, and convicted by a Jury duly impanelled, and sworn to give a verdict according to the evidence laid before them."

* Brougham's Colonial Policy, v. 2. p. 308.

Mr. *Fowell Buxton* said, that honourable gentlemen on the other side had uniformly deprecated all such discussions as the present, upon the ground that they tended to keep alive all those violent and angry feelings which were said to exist in our colonies, and were described to have their origin in the agitation of the question of slave emancipation in this country. For himself, he was always in favour of those discussions, because he felt that they were productive of great benefit to the important object which he had in view. Not a meeting took place, not a discussion arose in that House on the subject, in which some advantage was not gained, some concession was not made, in favour of the negroes. Even that night, and thus early in the discussion, some important concessions were made by the hon. Secretary for the Colonies. It was not his intention to follow his hon. friend through all the mazes of his argument, but this he had admitted, that no such proceedings would be for a moment allowed in this country; and further, his admissions proved, that where slavery existed, impartial justice could not be obtained. Let the House look at the series of injustice and cruelty which had been perpetrated within the last three years. First came the trial, he might call it the murder of Mr. Smith, the Missionary; then followed the massacre, he could use no better term, of the negroes at Demerara, merely because they wished to know what was their real situation; close upon this followed the persecution of the Missionary Shrewsbury; then came the deportation of two free natives from Jamaica; next, the Berbice Papers; and last of all the proceedings at Jamaica, which occupied their attention that night. Now, he would undertake to show, from the evidence before them, that there was no plot at St. Mary's, St. James's, or St. George's. With respect to the proceedings at St. George's, there were three witnesses, Mack, Corberand, and Hypolite. One stated that the former was a great liar; his young master said, he would not believe him, and his old master said, he had a bad opinion of him. He would undertake to shew that the evidence of Corberand was altogether false and con-

tradictory; and in doing so, he should confine himself entirely to the report of the proceedings before the Court. Corberand said, in page 84, "that being in one of the negro houses, and hearing a noise, he was induced to go and see what it was; that he found a large concourse of negroes in Richard Montagnac's house, which was called the Court House," &c. &c. In page 96 he said, "that he met the parties coming from Balcarres on the night of the Swear—that he met them there on purpose," &c. So that from this evidence it appeared, that Corberand, on one occasion, said, he met the parties accidentally; and, on another, he swore that he met them on purpose. Then again Corberand said, they offered to make him clerk. In page 103 he said, that, on meeting him near Montagnac's house, that person said, speaking of him, "there comes the clerk." He then described the time of the meeting, which was at variance with his former statement. He begged of the House to consider what it was this witness swore at the trial. First, he swore that he saw a negro cut his finger, but, correcting himself, he said that it was his arm; and that "he dropped the blood in a basin, to which he put a quart of rum and some gunpowder, and served it round to all of them to drink." Here the House saw this witness, who saw a magician practising his incantations, and yet he did not proceed to tell his master. Well, the magician went on, "the drink was to render them invulnerable, and a part of the mixture rubbed upon their faces was to render them invisible to the white men;" but the magician did not stop here, for it seemed that he offered to catch the musket balls in his hand. The plan at first was, to destroy the whites, and he (Corberand) heard them appointing a king, generals, governor and a mayor; this appeared in page 84. In page 89 he said, that the plot was contemplated before he knew Lecesne; they were to fight all; they never spoke how they were to fight the soldiers in this country. In page 130, he stated, that "he knew Lecesne since he was a little boy; that Lecesne was anxious that the affair should be kept secret, but did not swear him to secrecy." And yet in another place he said, so little did Lecesne care for secrecy, that he was seen marching openly with music at the head of a party? Mack, in his evidence, said, "he believed there were a number of guns with proportionable ammunition, concealed in a bush, though he never saw them;" and again, that he saw no person with a gun but Oliver. In another place he swore that he saw Wray with a gun, powder, and bag. He swore he saw Prince there. In page 88 he stated, that he did not see Spalding there on the night of the Swear. He, in one place, swore that they left Balcarres three weeks before Christmas; and, in another, that they were at Balcarres a week before Christmas. These contradictions, be it observed, appeared on the Minutes of Evidence, and were elicited, not in his cross-examination, but in the examination in chief. If then, such contradictions manifested themselves in the first instance, what a mass of perjury and false swearing might have been proved, if counsel had been employed to examine those witnesses! It should be observed, too, that the witnesses were questioned, and returned their answers in a language but indifferently understood by negroes. And being upon this subject, he wished to call the attention of the House to the defence made by one of the prisoners, at page 108—a defence, be it observed, made without the aid of counsel, and with a very imperfect knowledge of the nature of the proceedings against him. This defence he wished to observe, was taken from the judge's notes:—

"Jack, at Balcarres, run for it; at night went to Balcarres; he knew it from word; walked through H. Oliver's house. H. Oliver, J. B. Corberand, and Jack together; this gun story made him know; but at Balcarres, H. Oliver, and J. B. Corberand quarrel about guns; H. Oliver asked why guns not to be concerned by J. B. C.? J. B. C. explained; three proposed to hide guns; two mules, three turns; six mules brought guns, six each; thirty-six guns; James Manharty and Charles Mack, and James Crossly, with Jack, slept in house; James Manharty brought guns; James Crossly helped to take them to his house first and second time. Second, asked what was in bags; James Crossly rebuked him; Jack said it favoured guns; they came in flannel with Osnaburghs; in Henry Oliver's house they put the guns; Buckra *looked*, found big trouble; Henry Oliver, J. B. Corberand, and J. Brame quarrelled; J. B. C. explained, and said the guns could be easily hid; eight guns came one month before Christmas, not two months; three hid guns; nobody to help; nobody but

these can find guns, and if not will be seen again; J. B. C. had powder keg, gave it H. Oliver; hid with guns; will confess what he has done, but no more; knows that every Saturday the negroes at Balcarres mustered; Bouger, Mount Pleasant, mustered; did not swear; the Court explained the nature of self conviction; was at Balcarres, never did anything, nor went to Cow-pen; saw the doing at Cow-pen, same as Charles Mack; as he was in lush, fell into scrape by being at Balcarres; never intended to hurt white man.

"Prince—no business in matters; wood, punish, fear; J. B. C. brought word; never mustered; Jack saw him at Balcarras, made hoops. M. Pl. gave Ct. to negroes to do work, though in the wood. B. P. Mul. H. Leo—gun—knows J. B. Corberand, put bit in mouth to get free; broke he neck; never let master's property; when at home worked at wood; made baskets for salt."

This was called hearing a defence, from a poor creature who, if he could have spoken English, could easily have proved a mass of perjury and corruption, which would have established his innocence. [Here an hon. member whispered Mr. Buxton.] His hon. friend had very properly reminded him of the impression made upon the negroes by what they called "put bit in mouth." A bit was a small piece of silver coin, and there existed amongst the negroes a superstitious feeling, that if a man put a piece of silver in his mouth when giving evidence, he would be freed from all liability for any perjuries or falsehoods which he might utter. Upon this occasion the witness, Corberand, was actually observed to put a piece of silver in his mouth, and the jury having remarked upon it, he was not called again upon the trial [hear, hear!]. He wished next to call the particular attention of the House to a case which took place in the parish of St. James's. There thirteen persons were convicted; and, with respect to their trials, he need say little more than repeat the opinion expressed by the duke of Manchester, in respect to that district. That noble personage said, "that having most accurately looked into these trials, it afforded him particular satisfaction to state, that he could see no evidence of any combination at Montego Bay for a criminal purpose." He now came to St. Mary's; and, first, he found that a boy was brought forward as a witness against his own father. That boy first swore positively to the presence of an individual, upon a particular occasion, and then he swore as positively, that that individual was not present. Then it was said that the boy was not sworn, and it was not considered decent to administer an oath to him, it was indecent to swear the boy, but it was not considered indecent to bring him forward as a witness against his father's life! [hear, hear!].

The *Attorney-General* said, that the boy had not been sworn in either case, and this was the great objection to the course of proceeding.

Mr. *F. Buxton* said, he was not complaining of the conduct of any individual, but of the whole system, which was an abominable one; an illustration of which he was giving in this case. That boy William, who was not sworn, contradicted himself; and declared at one time, that persons had been present at meetings, whom at other times he did not mention. The second witness in this same case, a man named Ned, was a thief and an accomplice. Now, let the House consider the nature of this man's evidence. He stated that he was going along the high-road, and there he saw a number of negroes publicly plotting a conspiracy. They were doing this openly, and in a place where any person passing might over-hear them. He walked into the midst of the conspirators, and no objection was made to his presence; he offered them his counsel, they accepted it, and altered the whole of their plans at his suggestion. This was the whole of the direct proof against them, and even this was contradictory to that of the boy. The boy swore that there was a large concourse of negroes; the man swore that there was only six persons present. The boy said that there were plenty of women, the man asserted there were none. There were many other contradictions equally glaring, in the testimony of these two witnesses. There was no collateral evidence given, nor was there any corroborative evidence, save the testimony of Mr. Gordon, who stated, that, on the night in question, he heard a gun fired; that he arose from his bed and walked about his room for two hours; that he looked out of his window to see what was the matter; that he saw two negroes walking under his window with white frocks on (no doubt the garb of rebellion); that he heard one of them say "It won't do;" but what "would not

do," or what was the subject of their conversation, he could not say. Mr. Gordon, after hearing this, was so violently alarmed, that he went quietly to bed and forgot his alarm, and fell asleep. The evidence taken upon these trials, was sent day after day to the governor. But the evidence of this gentleman had reference to the night of the 17th, whereas, the insurrection broke out on the morning of the 17th. Next came the evidence of the constable. He was asked whether he had not found guns amongst the insurgents? His answer was, that he had not; but he had found a place where he was told guns had been. Then he was asked if he had not found large quantities of ammunition? and he answered that he had not. Had he not found a number of bayonets? "No," said the constable, "but I was shewn a basket in which I was told a great number of bayonets had been." He was at length asked, if he had not found a great many balls? and certainly, if the question had been put in the singular, instead of the plural, he might have answered in the affirmative; for he had, as he stated, found a single ball. This was the mighty stock of ammunition with which these desperate people were to overturn the king's government [hear! and a laugh]. Mention had been made of the important confessions made by some of the convicted persons. But, according to the statement of one of the magistrates, "only one of the wretches hanged yesterday, confessed—the rest refused to declare their coadjutors, and met their death without evincing any appearance of Christianity." His hon. friend had observed last night, that as the unfortunate negroes were liable to be imprisoned for their masters debts, so they might be punished for their masters faults, and here was an exemplification of the fact. The master robbed the wretched negro of his time; he persecuted the missionary who came to instruct him in his duty to his God; and then he turned round and accused that unhappy fellow-being with a want of Christianity! But it was said, that one convicted negro had made some important disclosures. If so, why were they not produced? And, until they were produced, he, for one, should take leave to doubt of their ever having been made. Looking at the state in which the unfortunate accused were placed, and finding that, notwithstanding the absence of counsel in their favour, the most glaring contradictions were made apparent on the part of the witnesses—notwithstanding which they were condemned, as he might say, unheard, he agreed with his hon. and learned friend in saying, that there was a total perversion of law and justice in our colonies. It had been treated lightly by the hon. gentleman opposite, but he would venture to say, that there was only one conspiracy on record in the annals of this country, which could bear any comparison with the present. It had been alluded to by his hon. and learned friend. He meant the Popish plot. It was singular to observe the similarity between these trials, and the prosecutions instituted in the reign of Charles 2nd for asserted implication in the Popish plot. Hume, in his history, says, that Titus Oates at first knew little or nothing, but afterwards, when occasion required, he knew every thing. The same observation was applied to Bedloe. The case was exactly similar in the West Indies. There the witnesses, as he had shown, set out with knowing little or nothing, but as they proceeded, they became well acquainted with all the details of the rebellious conspiracies then carrying on in the island. Then again, the same similarity ran through the whole proceedings. Witnesses were wanted, and hundreds of pounds offered as rewards, with abundant promises of kind treatment. Mr. Hume, in noticing this mode of procuring witnesses said, "Such bountiful treatment did not fail to bring forward a sufficient number of witnesses." No doubt it did bring forward a sufficient number. Witnesses were to be had in the West Indies in equal plenty as they could be obtained in England at that time, and for the same reason, rewards were given in both countries. It was advertised, that if free, they would be made comfortable for life; and if slaves, they should be emancipated, and provided for. He should now conclude his observations with a remark of Hume's; who, in speaking of the Popish plot, had said, that it was "an incident which for the credit of the nation, it were better to bury in eternal oblivion, but which it is necessary to perpetuate, as well to maintain the truth of history, as to warn, if possible, posterity, and all mankind, never again to fall into so gross, so shameful, so barbarous a delusion."

The *Attorney General* said, that in rising to offer a few observations upon the

subject brought under the consideration of the House by the motion of his hon. and learned friend, he begged distinctly to disclaim any intention of justifying the proceedings to which it had reference. After what had passed between himself and his learned friend, he felt called upon to rise. So far, however, from rising in the spirit anticipated by his hon. friend opposite, no one, he could assure him, could reprobate more than he did, or feel greater mortification at, the system of West-India evidence, and the administration of justice in that part of the British dominions. He confessed, that he could not understand upon what principles it was that the administration of the law should be different in the case of blacks to what it was in the case of whites. He could not understand why a more summary proceeding—a proceeding less fenced about by time, form, and circumstance—should prevail in one case more than in another; and he was persuaded, that ultimately they should arrive at that state of things, although he did not pretend to point out by what progression, in which the slave, where his life should be concerned, would be defended in the same way, and prosecuted by the same forms, as the white. It was impossible to look at this case, arising as it did out of the vice of the system, without deprecating that system, and wishing for a change. If the white, upon his trial, had an opportunity afforded him of knowing the charge, and thereby preparing his defence, why should not the black have the same advantage? Now, a particular act had not long since compelled the reduction of this charge to writing; but though that act had passed the legislative assembly at Jamaica, it had been accompanied with the sweeping proviso—that no objection ever should be raised upon a point of form. Unfortunately, persons in the situation of the members of that assembly were very likely not to distinguish accurately that which was matter of form from that which was matter of substantial importance. This was his objection. He did not mean to say, with reference to the present proceedings, that they were illegal under the slave law of Jamaica; but only let the forms of the charges in any of the trials be looked at, and let the House then say whether that system of law could be supported. The prisoners were charged with being guilty—of what?—of "rebellious conspiracy." And was that all? No; but there was the addition—and of "other crimes." This left the prosecutor at liberty to give evidence of any crime, no matter how unconnected with the main charge, of which the party might have been guilty. The prisoners were charged with "rebellious conspiracy." Every body knew in this country, that a man could not conspire by himself; but these charges stated no time, no place, nor any parties, with whom the culprit was accused of having conspired. Would the House, then, fail to say, that this system deserved reprobation in the highest degree; and would it not join heartily and unanimously in the amendment proposed by his hon. friend the Secretary for the Colonies, which, while it treated the law as one which could not too speedily be got rid of, discharged those from blame who had only followed the accustomed course in carrying it into effect?—He would now call the attention of the House to another curious point—he meant the law as it related to slave evidence. In the case of an accusation made against one of the white population, slave evidence was not allowed, on account of the low moral character of those individuals. They were supposed to possess no adequate idea of morality; they were viewed as beings who had no due notion of the distinction between truth and falsehood; and they were not suffered, therefore, to give evidence against a white man. But let the House mark the extraordinary inconsistency which distinguished the system. When a slave was to be tried, the evidence of slaves was admitted against the accused party—not under the sanction of an oath, but on his bare word, he having previously listened to an exhortation not to tell a falsehood. Now, he would ask the House, could a system of this kind be good? Could it lead to the ends of justice? He did not blame the persons who acted under this system, but he blamed, in the most decided manner, the system itself. Those individuals were not proceeding contrary to the law, their acts were only in accordance with it. He reproached not them—It was the law which he condemned. Now let the House look at the charge which was made in the case of Charles Browne. What was it? It was a charge of high treason. The principal witness on the occasion to which he was now referring, was the boy William. Was he sworn? No, he was not. He was insensible to the obligation of an oath,

and yet he was admitted to give evidence to take away the life of a fellow-slave. And here he begged the House to mark another peculiar circumstance. Was it not, he asked, the universal rule of common law in this country (and he always understood that the common law of the country extended to Jamaica), that hearsay evidence should not be received? Yet, in this case, hearsay evidence was received to a very great extent. The boy William said, "Sterling, my father, spoke such and such facts." This was the very worst species of hearsay evidence; and yet it was admitted against the prisoner. He understood that, though the law was different with respect to whites, this course of proceeding had been uniformly admitted with reference to blacks. He condemned this system in its general principle; he condemned it also in its mode of working, as it was developed in the cases before the House. But when he stated this, he must declare his conscientious belief, that the persons who were engaged in those prosecutions were convinced of the existence of a conspiracy; and, in endeavouring to defeat it, it could not be denied that they had acted in accordance with the established law—that law which had existed for a hundred and fifty years in the colony. He did not, he could not, attempt to defend that system; on the contrary he joined in its reprobation; but still it was due to those who only acted under that system to state the fact. Let the House consider further the inconsistency which appeared in some of those trials, and which had been very properly pointed out by his hon. and learned friend who spoke first on this occasion. The boy William declared before the Court, that he knew of large bodies of negroes meeting together; but, in his first examination, he had spoken only of the assembling of five persons. Every body, however, who read the reports of those trials, must perceive that they were very imperfectly given. Indeed, they could form but a very loose idea of the guilt or innocence of the parties accused, from the mere reading of those reports. Those who were present, by marking the demeanour of the witnesses, by observing the conduct of the accused, could form a more just idea of the guilt or innocence of the parties, than any set of men were capable of doing from the perusal, not to say of an imperfect report, but of the most perfect report of those proceedings. On that point, therefore, some allowance should be made.—He objected, as much as his hon. and learned friend could do, to the evidence of a son being received against his father. Here, however, he must observe, that this was not illegal; that it was not contrary to the law, even in this country. He was not sorry to say, that he had known instances in our criminal courts, where a son and daughter were sworn to give evidence when the life of the father was at stake.—There was another observation of his hon. and learned friend, on which he wished to make a remark. His hon. and learned friend had said, that on one of those trials nothing material was disclosed in evidence, except what was advanced by a wife against her husband. Now, he admitted, that evidence was given by a female against the prisoner; and he knew that, in the printed report, that female was stated to be the prisoner's wife. He knew, however, and his learned friend must also know, that when amongst the slaves, a woman entered into cohabitation with a man, it was usual to speak of her as that man's wife. He had made inquiry into the fact, whether the woman who gave evidence in this case was or was not the wife of the prisoner; but he had not been able to procure satisfactory intelligence on the subject. He admitted that, if she were the wife of the prisoner, nothing could be more irregular—nothing could be more contrary to law, nothing could be a greater violation of the first principles of justice, than to suffer her to be examined; but, on the other hand, if she were merely cohabiting with him, it was not illegal—it was not contrary even to the law of England, as practised in the highest courts. It was true that, under such circumstances as had been disclosed, he himself would not have returned a verdict against those people; but he must contend, that there was no ground for charging those before whom they were prosecuted with any intentional act of injustice or impropriety. The question was, did those persons believe that a conspiracy existed? Surely no person who had read the letter of the magistrates to lieut.-colonel Cox, could for a moment suppose that those individuals did not fully believe that a conspiracy had been formed. The answer to that letter clearly showed the honest conviction on the mind of lieut.-colonel Cox to have been, that the persons accused were engaged in a criminal conspiracy. Lieut.-colonel Cox

was well known and highly respected by many members of that House. He was a gentleman possessing English manners, feelings and habits. He was brought up in this country. He was a man of known mildness and humanity; but being convinced of the existence of a conspiracy in the island of Jamaica, he felt the necessity of using prompt measures to put an end to it.—But there was other evidence on this point which he considered most decisive. He meant the honest persuasion which appeared to fill the mind of every gentleman on the island. He begged leave to allude, most particularly, to what had passed in the debate in the House of Assembly on the Slave-evidence bill. One of the most active supporters of that measure was a gentleman of the name of Evans. No man was, or could be, more anxious to ameliorate the condition of the slaves in the West-India islands than that individual was; and therefore his persuasion on this point—namely, that a conspiracy existed—must make a greater impression on the House, and on the mind of the hon. and learned member himself, than that of almost any other person. Mr. Evans, in his speech, thus expressed himself—"We had the misfortune at the period to which I have alluded, to be compelled to institute the important trials of those persons." This, be it observed, was the expression of an individual, running, in a certain degree, the same race as his hon. and learned friend —advocating the same cause with the same sincerity; and, he would add, with great and distinguished talents. Mr. Evans went on to say,—"The parishes of St. Mary, St. George, and St. James, were the chief scene of the conspiracy. Fifty-four persons in all were convicted, and twenty-three were acquitted. Of those convicted some were executed, some were transported, and some were pardoned. The convictions in almost every case rested on the evidence of slaves; and yet no one supposed that that evidence was defective. On the contrary, it appeared to be clear and decisive. Of the number of slaves examined on those trials, only two or three were viewed with suspicion; and their evidence was disregarded, except it was confirmed by other and more credible testimony." Why did he read this? He read it because it was the evidence of an honest individual—of an individual who was anxious to render the slaves as comfortable as possible—to the fact, that he believed in the existence of a conspiracy. He read it to prove the decided conviction which prevailed in the minds of honourable men, that a conspiracy really existed, and that the parties accused were guilty of the offence charged against them. And yet after this evidence they were called on to censure and blame twelve men who declared on their oaths, that they were of opinion that a conspiracy existed. If the House thought that those men did not believe in the facts detailed in evidence, then the motion of his hon. and learned friend ought to be supported; but if, on the other hand, they felt that a conspiracy had been set on foot—if they were convinced that the parties proceeded consistently with the law, and administered it (acting under the solemn sanction of an oath) honestly and fairly, to the best of their judgment, then, however they might disapprove of that law, it would be their duty to support the amendment of his hon. friend. That amendment was condemnatory of the system, and reprobated the abominations practised under it; but it did not pronounce any opinion upon the conduct of the persons who had acted upon the occasion. It was known that many of those individuals were persons of high character, and he did not feel himself justified, upon the imperfect materials before the House, to agree to a resolution of censure upon such individuals. Let the House condemn the system—let them abolish it—let them proclaim it to be a system as unjust as it was cruel, but let them not, after having so long slumbered at their posts—after having for so long a period, not adopted another and a better system—condemned those who had given effect to the system, who had acted consistently with law, and who had, in the administration of that law, acted honestly, and to the best of their judgment. He had made these observations, because a call had been personally made upon him. He agreed with his hon. and learned friend in almost all that he had said, and he should have acted unworthily, if he had not obeyed that call, and had not thus openly stated his opinions.

Dr. *Lushington* said, that feeling so deep an interest as he did in every question connected with the administration of justice in the colonies, he trusted the House would indulge him while he expressed his sentiments upon the proceedings which were the subject of the present discussion.

If the arguments of his hon. and learned friend, the Attorney-general, were good for any thing, they must go to the fearful and dangerous extent of shewing, that provided the forms of law were but observed —that provided the forms established in any one of the distant territories of this country, however revolting to humanity, were adhered to—the House of Commons were prohibited from inquiring how far justice had been administered in any given case. The hon. and learned gentleman had dwelt on the difficulty which must arise in judging of what had occurred at a great distance, when an incorrect record of the proceedings was before the House —when they had not such an opportunity as the jury had, for sifting and examining the matters alleged against the accused. He, however, looked to the principle which governed those proceedings; and, keeping that principle in view, he would contend, that it mattered not whether those individuals were executed on the evidence of bribed slaves, or of an unsworn boy; they might have been condemned on half the evidence adduced, and the argument of the hon. and learned gentleman would have been just as conclusive and just as available. He, however, would contend, that the first duty of that House was, to see that justice was administered in a strictly impartial manner, even in the most distant possessions of this country. This was the more important, because in those distant possessions, there was an infinitely greater opening for injustice and oppression, than could, by possibility, be found near the seat of government. Here, if only an apprentice were ill-used, or if the least abuse were discovered in a gaol, members of that House were ready to start up, to call on ministers to redress the grievance, or, if they found it necessary, to proceed with the case themselves. Now, however, they heard of the execution of six or eight unfortunate individuals, under most extraordinary circumstances, and they were told, that they were not to inquire into what had taken place, because, forsooth, it was all in strict accordance with an old and barbarous system. The evidence which they had heard, and which was printed in the minutes, was the most inconclusive that could be imagined: but when observations were made on it, it was exclaimed, "Oh, that evidence was considered quite ample by the duke of Manchester: that evidence was deemed quite sufficient by him." He should like to know what evidence the noble duke had received. Was the whole of it to be found in those papers, or had he kept any part of it back? To him it appeared to be the weakest and the most illegal evidence he had ever seen. How came it, he should like to know, that the duke of Manchester had authorized the execution of the individuals found guilty upon this evidence, without having it fully examined by legal men? He might have had the opinion of the chief justice of the island, who would at once have detected the errors with which that evidence abounded. He contended that the whole proceeding was contrary to the forms of substantial justice, and he was astonished to think that any tribunal, consisting of Englishmen, could, in a case of life or death, receive the evidence of an unsworn boy. He imputed not to the duke of Manchester or the magistrates any wilful malice; but he did impute to them great carelessness. He did accuse them with having, when they should have been most awake, fallen asleep on their posts, and suffered themselves to be dictated to by others. He had evidence which was to be found in the minutes of the extraordinary statements which had been received on the trial of these people. They had been found guilty of rebellion in a great measure, upon hearsay evidence—that species of evidence which was never received in this country, and ought not to be received in any of its possessions. In p. 52, No. 14, they would find the information of W. C. Movier, esq. who states, "that Mr. Hole, a non-commissioned officer of the Hanover troops, and others, informed him at Flint River, that the overseer at Magotty, Mr. M'Donald, had informed them, that the driver on the Magotty estate had stated to him—['Here,' said Dr. Lushington, 'was hearsay evidence with a vengeance; it was no less than three deep.'] —that the Tryall negroes had invited the Magotty negroes to join them in a conspiracy to assert or claim their rights, or freedom, but the Magotty negroes had refused to do so; nothing of the kind was intended on Magotty estate by the negroes." Such was the satisfactory testimony which led to so melancholy a result! He would next call the attention of the House to some of the important particulars which were made known to the government of Jamaica, and on which it had been pleased to act. Let gentlemen turn

to No. 7, and peruse the letter of Mr. Vaughan. It was strange that any person could act upon such frivolous information. The commencement of that letter ran thus,—"I deem it my duty to make the following communication. It appears there is a general expectation among the negroes of freedom being given shortly by government at home. The negroes are every where behaving well, and perform their work as usual, but still entertain this belief. The grounds on which I have formed this opinion I shall now give. Mrs. Fowler, at Kensington, St. James's.—She saw many strange negroes, who talked freely with her that they were soon to be free; she laughed at them, and asked whether if they had a fowl they would give it up for nothing? Eliza Tucker, a person of colour, Greenwich-hill, St. James's.—She hired a man from Gilsborough on negro days, who talked much of this free, but said he did not like it, for many negroes would be idle, and quarrel and fight as in Guinea country, and who was there to give clothes, fish, &c.?" Now, he would ask, could any rational being suppose, looking at the samples of evidence which he had quoted, that any insurrection was contemplated, or could be contemplated, by those who were described as likely to be the actors in it? His hon. and learned friend, after expressing his entire disapprobation of this system, had stated that, on the present occasion, no blame could be attached to the magistrates, who had honestly and truly adhered to the laws. For his own part, he could not in any degree assent to that position for a moment. He could not think that twelve Englishmen (and there were five magistrates on the bench), unless they were actuated by strong prejudice, or by that fear and cowardice which sometimes compelled men to do injustice towards others, could have returned such a verdict as they had done. The hon. Secretary for the Colonies had said, that not one of the persons who gave evidence had been induced to come forward on the occasion by the influence of bribes. Now, in contradiction to that, he would state one of the resolutions of the secret committee of the House of Assembly. The words they used were these:—"We recommend to the House to reimburse to the parish of St. Mary the sum of 376*l.* paid by them for the manumission of certain slaves who rendered essential service by the discoveries which they had made." Was this likely to produce honest testimony on the one hand, and were those who held out such temptation seeking for such evidence on the other? Those whose manumission was thus paid for had, he would maintain, received their reward for the evidence they had given; and he must say, that if any thing could tend more than another to pollute the source of justice, it was the holding out such an extraordinary temptation to slaves. Those persons were, of all beings living, the most easy to be tempted; and here a temptation of the most winning description was placed before them. They were asked to give evidence against, and to prosecute to conviction, their fellow-slaves, as the road by which they might arrive at the greatest boon which could be conferred on a bondman; namely, his own liberation.—After he had stated this, he would ask whether any man living could get up and say that the conduct of the duke of Manchester, or rather of the Jamaica government, was correct, in proceeding on such evidence as this? How could they, on the single evidence of an accomplice, corroborated in no one particular, and who had contradicted his former testimony in the course of subsequent trials, proceed to the extremities which they had done? Was there, he demanded, the exercise of that cool consideration which ought to have been employed on such an occasion, before a number of victims were condemned to death and execution? Yet, such was the fact. That sort of evidence was received; condemnation was the consequence, and death followed.—There was much more in those trials which filled the mind with disgust and abhorrence. His hon. and learned friend had said most truly, that the people of Jamaica were entitled, as their birth-right, to the protection of the law of England. But while they enjoyed exclusively every advantage that excellent system afforded, was it to be tolerated, that there should be another system for the government of their slaves, in which every principle of injustice and oppression was nurtured? The law of England said, that the judges must be free from all imputation—they were considered to be of counsel for the prisoner; but, in the whole course of these trials, did they ask a single question in cross-examination? Did colonel Cox, who had been so highly eulogised, say to any of the witnesses—"Pray, have you been promised your free-

dom?" Or, "Pray, have you been threatened by your master?" Those judges who were of counsel for the prisoner asked no such thing. Those five magistrates had not the common honesty or the common humanity to make inquiries of that kind, although they were essential to the interests of justice. What was the evidence given, in the case of Charles Brown, by the unsworn boy William, only 15 years of age, and by the slave Ned, who was in the same situation? It was altogether weak and inefficient, as any person who read the trial would perceive. But to bolster up this evidence, they brought forward a white man, one William Kelly, who stated, "I am overseer of Frontier estate; prisoner is a cooper; had been head driver, and was very severe on the negroes, particularly on women, for which witness removed or broke him, and made him a cooper; he was partial in his punishment, and some he punished severely." Now what, he asked, had this to do with the conspiracy? The fact was, those who prosecuted said, "if you do not believe the unsworn evidence of the boys, if you do not believe the slave evidence, we must give you something to act upon in the shape of the evidence of the sworn witness Kelly." This proceeding, he contended, was entirely contrary to the spirit of English jurisprudence. He would not, after the able exposition of his hon. and learned friend (Mr. Denman), travel through all the discrepancies of this evidence. There appeared to him to be good reasons to induce the House to express a very different opinion from that contained in the amendment. If they agreed to that amendment, the result would be, that if those in power abroad adhered merely to forms, they would be entirely relieved from the responsibility of doing substantial justice.—But it was said, that one of those slaves (and be it remembered, one only) had confessed his guilt at the place of execution. Now, he would ask whether the following scene did not occur at the execution in the parish of St. Mary? He would ask whether the graves of the individuals then brought out for execution were not dug beneath the gallows? He would ask whether the clergyman did not offer to spare the lives of any two of them, if they confessed their guilt? And he would ask, finally, whether the whole of them, except Charles Watson, did not firmly deny their criminality? He put these interrogatories thus strongly, because he had conversed with an eye-witness, who spoke positively to the facts. These unfortunate men were, at the moment that death was staring them in the face, called on, as the means of saving their lives, to confess crimes which they utterly denied. This he believed was something like the system which was acted upon in Ireland, during the rebellion of 1798. He did not mean to say, that under peculiar circumstances, offers should not be made to elicit information, but in this case it was a question with respect to slaves. The inhabitants of Jamacia declared their evidence to be such as, under ordinary circumstances, could not be relied on in the smallest degree. With respect to the European inhabitants of Jamaica, such evidence was altogether excluded; and to say to Watson and his colleagues, when on the point of death, that pardon should be granted to any of them who would confess and give information, was neither more nor less than offering a premium to deprive the other men of their lives.—But it was said, that the duke of Manchester, wishing to avoid any unnecessary bloodshed, had proceeded thus promptly—he would say precipitately. Therefore it was, that he had an example made. He would merely say to this, that the duke of Manchester, before he made that example, should have taken care that it was a just and proper one. It was said, however, that there were 20,000 whites in the island opposed to a population of 380,000 blacks; and that, if the latter were to make a simultaneous movement, the destruction of the former would be inevitable. Therefore, it appeared, laws were passed that were calculated to destroy the very semblance of justice. Many, in consequence, lost sight of that humanity which would operate with them in the case of a white man, and execution followed conviction as hastily as possible. Nothing but timidity and pusillanimity could lead to such cruel results. They arose from apprehension of those scenes which an hon. friend near him had described upon another occasion about twenty years ago. The parties interested exclaimed, "if the negroes once rise up, nothing but scenes of bloodshed can ensue." He admitted, that nothing could be more horrid, nothing could be more appalling, than the character of negro ferocity; but as that point had been touch-

ed on, he wished to know whether it was justifiable in a white man, educated in the Christian religion, brought up in the first principles of morality, to go in cold blood, and in consequence of a dread of danger, to wreak signal vengeance on those whom fate or fortune had placed in his power? He well recollected the statement of Bryan Edwards, who saw two unhappy human beings convicted in Jamaica, and sentenced to be suspended in chains and starved to death. He observed, that it was found necessary to make a striking example, and to render the punishment more dreadful, they were indulged with the luxury of a full meal before the irons were put on them. "I went," said Mr. Edwards, "to see them myself, and for six days I saw them undergoing their torments." Could any individual believe that a man like Bryan Edwards, so highly accomplished, and possessing so many rare acquirements, could narrate such a scene as this without a single comment on its barbarity? Such, however, was the fact. If they wished to preserve the islands to the empire, and to retain the black population in subjection, for Heaven's sake let them do justice and love mercy. It was impossible for men of any race to remain quiet so long as the feelings of our common nature were wronged and tortured. It was not the negro character, any more than it was the character of other men, to be continually restless and blood-thirsty. Let them look to the example of Sierra Leone, where 18,000 persons were collected who had formerly been caught wild, as he might say—who had been driven almost mad by their captors and oppressors — forming a motley group gathered from every quarter of Africa to seek freedom. He had it from his friend Mr. Hamilton, who had resided there for twenty years, that there had never been more than 250 soldiers engaged to keep them in order, and those troops had never been once under the necessity of resorting to force. Let them then resort to those principles laid down by eternal Providence for the good government of man: let them imbue their regulations with reason: let them endeavour to impart to the negro a sense of justice, and a knowledge of his God. He trusted that time and circumstances were nearly ripe for raising the condition of that fallen race to a state more gratifying to God and man. By those means, and by an enlightened course of action, tending to their final emancipation, they might secure the regard the affections of their negro subjects. He would trouble the House no more at present. Sure he was that the present consideration of the subject would do much good in the colonies. For nothing could be better calculated to do good than the knowledge in our colonies, in the East or in the West, that the doors of that House were opened wide to well-founded complaints; and that regardless of all difficulties and troubles, in defiance of all danger, there was a resolution to do justice, and to punish oppression.

The *Solicitor-General* said, he perfectly concurred in all the sentiments expressed by his hon. and learned friend in his generous abhorrence of slavery, and in his eloquent denunciation of the abuses of slavery. As some difference, however, must still prevail between their opinions, he would take the liberty of offering a few words to the attention of the House, as to the points upon which he differed from his hon. and learned friend; and a few words as to the points upon which they were agreed. If the resolution of his hon. and learned friend had only for its object a prospective improvement in the mode of trial which obtained in the colonies, he might have yielded his assent to it; for the amended resolution of his hon. friend near him was to that very effect. But, when his hon. and learned friend went beyond that line, he proposed something, to which he at least could not give his concurrence. Now, the fact was, that the hon. and learned member's proposition consisted of two parts. That hon. and learned member, not only required that the negro should be equalised, in point of the mode of trial, with the free white man; but he asserted, in pretty direct terms, the gross malversation of all those who had been concerned in the late trials. With that charge it was impossible for him to agree. He would call the attention of the House to one of the prominent parts of the hon. and learned member's resolution. It asserted, that we "contemplated, with sorrow, the perversion of law, and the violation of justice, displayed in the late trials." Now, the House could not adopt that resolution, without being prepared to state, almost in so many words, that the judge who had presided, the jury who had tried and convicted, and the duke of Manchester, who had suffered the law to take

its course on these criminals, had all been guilty of a perversion of the law, and a violation of justice. In such a statement he for one could not concur. The hon. and learned member opposite seemed to have supposed that he (the Solicitor-general) intended to say, that all these trials had been conducted in every respect as correctly as they would have been here; and that in order to support the administration of justice in these colonies, he must make it out to be as good in them as in England. In that supposition the hon. and learned member was mistaken, and there was the fallacy in his argument. The question was not, whether the trials had been properly conducted according to the law of England, but whether they were in accordance with the law of Jamaica? This question was to be determined, not by any general rules of our law, but by the particular lex loci—by the custom of the colony. Those laws and customs were not the same as they were here; and it was therefore not matter of personal reprehension, that the conclusions which the authorities of that island had come to were not the same as those to which a judge and jury in this country might have arrived. The fair question was, whether these trials were illegal, according to the laws of Jamaica? With respect to those laws, he was not prepared to say whether, if a negro was tried for sedition or treason, he should object to reduce the form and mode of trial to all the certainty of the law of England. He was not prepared to say whether, if a negro was to be tried for high treason he would not have the indictment framed in the same manner as in this country, and whether he would not give the prisoner all the advantage which might be derived from a knowledge of the names of the witnesses intended to support the charge. In fact, he believed he should not object to equalize the negro, with respect to all the means of defence to such a charge which the white man might possess, if it were preferred against him. But then, while he did not object to granting these prospective advantages to the negro, he did object most strongly to a retrospective resolution comdemning the conduct of the judge, the jury, and the governor. On one point, therefore, it was clear that both sides of the House, were agreed; and he could not but afford his mite of praise to his hon. friend near him, for putting in a state of approximation the sentiments and feelings of both sides of the House, with regard to the prospective amelioration of the condition of the negro. This amelioration might be effected by the legislative assembly of the colony; or, if they did not make any attempt towards it, then, indeed, the duty might devolve on this House to effect that object. What were the grounds, he would ask, on which this House was now called on to adopt the resolution of his hon. and learned friend opposite? On one side, it was imputed that the colony was not governed by laws such as we enjoyed in England, or by the spirit of the British constitution. He believed that all the members in the House would be inclined to agree that such was the fact, if the authorities of the colony were to be made responsible for having acted under the existing laws, which all might acknowledge to be bad, but by which those authorities were bound. What, then, if the subject was closely examined, was the real difference between the two sides of the House? He could assure the honourable members opposite, that in all their warmth of sentiment, in all their indignation of feeling, at any act of negro oppression, he was fully prepared to agree, and that on such subjects his feelings were the same as theirs. He would adopt practically that branch of the resolution which said, that, for the future, trials of negroes in the colony ought to be regulated in the same manner as, and in every respect put on the same footing with those of white men. Further than that he could not go; and he was surprised that his hon. and learned friend, who was so well versed in parliamentary proceedings, and who knew so well the laws and constitution of this country, should attempt to lash and stigmatise, in the severest manner, a number of individuals, for having acted according to the laws as they now stood. For himself, he was convinced, that no proceeding in parliament, nor any record in any one of our courts, could be found casting censure on men for having administered a system of law under which they lived, merely because that system was bad. It was wrong to impute this as an error to the men, when, in fact, it was an error in the law; and the blame, if any, was therefore due to the law, and not to the individual. His hon. friend's amendment met all these objections. That the negro should not receive a fair trial was a pro-

position which no hon. member would affirm. On both sides of the House the feeling on that point was the same: on both sides of the House the opinion was the same: on both sides of the House the mode recommended for attaining it was the same; namely, that the colonial legislature should be called upon to amend the colonial laws—and should they refuse, that that House would itself amend them. —He wished to say one word on another part of this subject. He had read through all the documents referred to by his hon. and learned friend, and especially those relating to the case in which the evidence of the son had been admitted against the father. In that case, he was of opinion, that all the evidence given by the son, was, in fact, furnished by two other witnesses, on whose evidence the father might have been convicted. Again, he had read the documents relating to the trial of the man, whose wife was admitted to give evidence against him; and in that case, as well as in the other, he thought the substance of her evidence was to be found in the testimony of two other witnesses, on whose statements that prisoner might have been convicted. In the second of these cases especially, it was clear the prisoner had a gun in his possession. He could not distinctly collect the ground of the charge now made by his hon. and learned friend opposite. It was objected, certainly, that some slave evidence was not admitted at the trial, but that formed no ground of charge against the judge. Again, it was complained that the names of the witnesses were not furnished to the prisoners; to that complaint the same answer might be given. Further, it was alleged, that the witnesses examined, did not so prove the case, as that a judge and jury in this country would have acted on their testimony, and have convicted the prisoners; but surely it was not because the judge and jury there did not weigh evidence so nicely as a judge and jury would weigh it here, that the Jamaica jury were to be punished. They were not to be made responsible, because they were not such a nicely balancing and critically investigating jury as a jury of the county of Kent might have been; and yet the hon. and learned member's resolution went to condemn them for a want of those powers of investigation which an English jury guided by an English judge, might discover in a cause submitted to their decision.—He should now advert to one thing, which, not latently, but broadly, had been charged against the duke of Manchester. In doing this, he could not but observe on the egregious discrepancy between the statements of the hon. member for Weymouth. Sometimes the House were told that the duke was too severe; while at others he was charged with having permitted thirteen criminals to escape. Now, he admired that hon. member's feelings, but could not agree with his logic, by which the duke was one moment censured for severity, and at another rebuked for lenity. The hon. gentleman seemed to have supposed, that some learned member was likely to rise on his side of the House, who, it was expected, would track the course of that evidence step by step. Now, he thought it very unlikely that such a task would be attempted by any learned member; and unquestionably he was not the learned member who would presume to travel through the ichnography of that evidence. If the hon. member meant to say, that the present system of law in the colony was bad, and, therefore, that the judges ought to be censured, then he must say that he agreed in the premises, but differed much from the conclusion. One hon. member had said that it was an unjust thing to refuse to admit the testimony of negroes, and that that refusal was founded on a prejudice existing against them, on account of their want of religious knowledge. In talking of the prejudices of others, we should consider our own. He would not trouble the House with the details of our rules of evidence, but it could hardly be unknown to hon. members, that, until within 150 years ago no testimony was admitted in our courts from persons who were not christians? Nay, more: it was not more than sixty years since the evidence of Pagans or infidels was rendered admissible by a determination of lord Hardwicke. Even at this very period the evidence of Quakers in criminal cases was not admissible. Might it not be said that it was very hard for a Quaker to have his house torn down or pillaged, and not be able to prosecute the wrong-doers? ["Amend the law, then," from a member across the table.] He would not object to the proposition of the hon. gentleman, who was at liberty, if he chose it, to propose an amendment of the law in that particular to the parliament. What he now complained of, was not colonial injustice, but the British injustice, con-

demning men for carrying into effect the existing law of the country. He was in favour of the amendment of the law of the colony, but he thought we should set the example, and that the amendment of our own laws should precede the amendment of theirs. On these grounds he differed from the resolution of his hon. and learned friend. He had no objection that the same privileges in the mode of trial which were now enjoyed by the white men should be extended to those who were tinged with a black colour; but he did object to condemning men for not acting on a principle not yet acknowledged by the laws under which they lived. He thought the House should recognize that distinction when they were called on to exercise the duty of amending the laws of the colony. He agreed in the sentiments of the hon. gentlemen opposite, as to the hated and accursed system of slavery, and he went along with them in their propositions for the gradual abolition of it, and of its evils; but he could not subscribe to the resolutions they had proposed, which involved in the same disgrace, delinquency, and punishment (for the condemnation of this House was the severest punishment), several individuals for having administered the laws of the colony as they at present subsisted. That those laws were bad, he agreed; but they did exist, and it was no crime to administer them as long as they remained in force.

Mr. *W. Smith* congratulated the House on the progress of more liberal views and sentiments with respect to the extinction of negro slavery, and on the active share which his majesty's ministers were taking in the amelioration of the condition of that portion of the subjects of the empire. In what a new situation were the colonists and inhabitants placed by the concessions made that night! He would not weaken the eloquence of his hon. friends by going over the points of evidence on which they had touched. He rejoiced to hear the expression of the Solicitor-general, who called the West-India system, an accursed system.

The *Solicitor-General* said, it was slavery that he had spoken of as an accursed system. He had not applied the phrase to any portion of the subject now under consideration.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, he understood, then, that the hon. and learned gentleman did admit the system of slavery to be an accursed system; and he had defended the governor, judge, and jurors for supporting that system of law which slavery had made necessary to the preservation of the colonies. The necessity for the laws had grown out of the system of slavery. Did he, in saying that, misquote the hon. and learned gentleman? The hon. and learned gentleman did not mean to impute corruption to a Jamaica judge, or dishonesty to a Jamaica jury, but he said, that justice could not be expected from a Jamaica jury, bound and fettered as they were by the laws. Did he in that misquote the hon. and learned gentleman? If the hon. and learned gentleman had examined all the documents, he would have found reason for imputing to those judges and juries, that they had not attended strictly to the evidence laid before them. He would not hesitate to say, that it did appear to him that those judges and juries had not administered the laws even as they existed. That there were technicalities in the practice of the Jamaica courts might be true; but, was the conviction of men on hearsay evidence, and at third hand too, an observance of a mere technicality? Was not every man of common sense and common humanity bound to notice the vagueness and looseness of the evidence given upon the charges? He would refer to the case in which the evidence of the son had been received against the father, not as the only one that he could adduce, but as a strong one, of the necessity of an alteration in the laws. Indeed it was impossible that those laws should be suffered much longer to exist, a dishonour and a disgrace to the British government; nay, to the empire at large. "Are we to alter the laws?" asked the House. "No," replied the planters, "you shall not touch our laws."—"We hate and abominate those laws, and we will alter them" say the House.—"No, you shall not touch them," was the language of the colonists. What species of control, therefore, could by possibility be exercised in that case, but public opinion? And his hon. friends only came forward to say, that the control of public opinion should be expressed, respecting the conduct of the judges and juries who had acted in the manner described. He would ask, was that a case in which consideration for the parties should prevent the expression of public opinion? However, let that question be decided as it might, the discussion would do good. It would open to the eyes of the public such scenes as

they were not accustomed to see. It would convince them, that the representations made by those who were falsely accused of misleading the public mind, were true representations; that they had not asserted one fact which was not fully made out by the documents produced; that they had not put forth one statement which was not confirmed to the very letter; that there was not one single accusation of cruelty which was not fully established. He did not say, that the right hon. Secretary (Mr. Canning) had given a few nights ago a picture of the amelioration in the condition of the slaves which he himself did not believe to be true; but he thought the persons to whom he had trusted for his information had grossly misinformed him. The right hon. gentleman had observed, that the abolition ought not to be attempted too hastily, because slavery had existed for ages, under governments who practised and respected the christian religion. But was West-India slavery to be considered in the same point of view as the slavery of remote times? No. West-India slavery was a mushroom, a creature of the day, of comparatively modern growth, and was as repugnant to the spirit of Christianity then, as it was now. Of the resolutions before the House, he preferred the original motion, because he thought the amendment proposed by his majesty's ministers softened down the transaction, and removed a part of the stigma which ought to attach to so detestable a proceeding.

Sir *Robert Wilson* said, that his hon. and learned friend was entitled to the thanks of the House for bringing forward the subject of West-India abuses. The House of Commons was the legitimate sanctuary where justice should be found; and he hoped that the appeal which had that night been made on behalf of those who were unable to state their wrongs, would not be made in vain. The hon. and learned gentlemen opposite called upon the House not to support the proposition, because it would amount to a vote of censure upon the government of the colony, and upon all those connected with the proceedings which formed the subject of complaint, which was the very object which he wished to see effected. A vote of censure should not only be passed on the governor, but on the judge and the jury, by whose verdict the lives of our fellow-men were taken away. That act had been endeavoured to be accounted for on the plea of necessity; but he could view it in no other light than that of an authorized murder. Not because they were guilty, were these wretched men convicted. The proofs of their criminality were altogether insufficient. The jury accepted evidence against them, which in law, justice, and humanity, they should have rejected. But there were other instances to be adduced, besides those already stated, of the wilful perversion of justice in Jamaica. In 1822, one James Simpson was tried at Kingston for having chained down a girl only nine years old for the purpose of committing a rape on her person. The counsel for the prisoner, however, took an objection, that being a slave, the girl could only be considered as a chattel, and that her evidence could therefore have no effect. The course of justice was stayed in consequence, and the case was transmitted to England for the consideration of the twelve judges, who decided that, in the then state of the law, judgment could not be inflicted, and the man was liberated accordingly. A strong recommendation had, at the time been forwarded to amend a system which allowed such atrocities to pass unpunished; but that recommendation had been treated like every other of the same kind, sent from this country. Leaving all political considerations out of the question, it was a bare act of justice to censure and reprobate, in the strongest terms, those who upheld and acted under such a system.

Mr. *Goulburn* said, he had not intended to have made any observations on the subject now under discussion, but finding that no one connected with the colonies had risen to express an opinion on the subject, and having had the misfortune to succeed to a property in those colonies, he felt it due to himself, to the colonists, and to the House, not to allow that opportunity to pass, of stating that there were persons connected with the colonies, who felt as warmly concerning all these transactions as any of the hon. members on the other side of the House. It was due to the colonists to state, that the sentiments of many of them were perfectly in unison with those of the gentlemen who reprobated these proceedings. He found it the more necessary to make this declaration, because he intended to vote for the amendment of his hon. friend near him, though in most of what had been

said, respecting the trials, the evidence and the laws of the colonies, he fully agreed with the hon. gentlemen opposite. But, though he was of this opinion, he did not go, and he could not go the whole length of the original proposition; because he was not prepared to visit with a heavy censure, or to stigmatize as criminal, men who, living in a state of society quite different from our own, whose property and lives being at stake, and who were acting under the greatest apprehension, had not conducted themselves quite so calmly, so dispassionately, as gentlemen would have conducted themselves in this country. He conceived the amendment of his hon. friend expressed all that it was necessary to express; and that the House ought to look less at the conduct of individuals, than to take measures to provide an effectual remedy for the system. He fully concurred with the hon. member for Norwich, that the chief control of the colonies must be looked for in the influence of public opinion; and, during his connection with the Colonial Department, he had, with that view, laid more papers on the table of the House than had ever before been submitted to parliament. If the resolution of his hon. friend went forth with the unanimous approval of the House, it would be impossible for the colonists not to see how highly their conduct was disapproved of. They must see, that gentlemen who differed on other subjects had united to condemn the colonial laws; and such a sentence of condemnation would, he thought, operate as an effectual check against similar proceedings in future. The resolution of the hon. and learned gentleman involved in it a principle that, if applied to the judicial establishments of this country, would lead to enormous evils. It called on the House, with only imperfect documents before it, to pass a severe censure on the magistrates who had carried the system into execution. He did not mean to give advice to the hon. and learned gentleman, but he thought his hon. friend's resolution was the better of the two, and that if it went forth with the unanimous approbation of the House, it would have more effect in the colonies, than a Resolution supported only by a part of the House.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he differed widely from the right hon. gentleman who had just sat down, in his view of the present question, and in his estimate of the nature and effect of the proposed amendment going out to the colonists. If he could feel that it would give them reason to belive, that the legislature of this country passed it as their unanimous opinion, that the system of judicature must be reformed, and if it added, what the right hon. gentleman seemed, by some strange misunderstanding of the meaning and purport of the amendment, to infer from it, an expression of disapproval of the course of judicial proceedings which had been exposed, and not attempted, even by the right hon. gentleman himself, to be defended—if the amendment were calculated to convey these impressions, he would not say that he would prefer it to the original resolution of his hon. and learned friend, but he would not feel that decided and irreconcilable repugnance to its adoption, of which, as it stood, he could not divest himself. But feeling as he did, that that amendment was an endeavour to get rid of the question altogether, and with the conviction on his mind that the proceedings which were the subject of the present debate, were sought to be screened, nay, actually defended by that amendment, he was determined to resist it with all his strength, and to press the resolution of his hon. and learned friend, although he should stand alone in the division. The House were told, that those proceedings were all clothed in the forms of law; and therefore it was said, that the system alone was to be amended and that it was not proper to express an opinion on the conduct of those who had acted under it. The Attorney-general had said, that he should be the last man to defend the system; and the Solicitor-general had exclaimed, God forbid, that he should deny, or defend the atrocities of the system! He was even indignant, that it should be supposed he had looked through the report, and examined the cases, with a view to defend it. He did not even attempt to palliate, what all admitted deserved blame; but he wished the House to distinguish between the law and the individuals, and only to censure the former. But, in his opinion, the law had been so perverted—the evidence was so inadmissible—the charge so vague and irregular that it was not possible to defend the conduct of the individuals. Even in the case of Smith the missionary, there is a better ground of defence. He was tried, indeed, by an anomalous court—by a court half military, half civil; but

there had been a definite disturbance, and there was against him a specific charge; but, in the St. Mary's case, how were the men put on their trial? His learned friend said, they were legally tried; but all the evidence against them was hearsay evidence, some at third hand—such as would not, as he well knew, be received in this country, or in any country where law was known. His learned friend had stated, that the whole had been conducted according to law, and that the law had not been violated. With all due respect to his learned friend, he would say, that if the law had not been violated, it had been perverted—that justice had been violated, and that, under colour of law, a gross and violent act of injustice had been committed. He should not care if the words "perversion of the law" were left out of the resolution, so long as it admitted, that general justice had been most grossly violated, and the common rights of humanity assailed. The charge on which the negroes of St. Mary's were put on their trial was different from that which was brought against those of St. George's and Hanover parishes. In the latter places, the indictments were regularly drawn up, and the requisite forms of law had been complied with; but in St. Mary's, the proceedings instituted against the unfortunate prisoners were not only marked with the greatest irregularities, but were conducted and hurried forward with the most indecent speed. He was entitled to draw this conclusion from the confession of the parties themselves. Colonel Cox wrote on the 20th, the negroes having been tried on the 19th, sending an account of the trial:—"I thought it my duty, he says, to insist on the magistrates trying the negroes that had been taken immediately, and to send their trial and sentence express; as it will, in my opinion, be highly important for the safety of the parish, and, probably, the island, that they should be executed before the holidays." Thus he hurried on the trial, that there might be an execution before the 25th of the month. From the documents furnished by the parties themselves, he could shew, therefore, that the trial at St. Mary's had been less regular than the trials at St. George's and Hanover, and that no delay, no respite, no breathing time, had been allowed between the trial and the execution. There was a necessity, it was supposed, to hasten the operation, to proceed with the trial, trusting to a conviction, in order that there might be an execution before the Christmas holidays.—Another omission, or rather difference between the trials at St. Mary's and at Hanover, was, that, at the latter, the prisoners had a solicitor, and not at the former. At Hanover there was an indictment; not a vague charge of conspiracy, the meaning of which no man could accurately define. The indictment was drawn up like an indictment in an English court of justice; and it was found by a grand jury, or a body performing the functions of a grand jury. The prisoners had solicitors and counsel, who took a technical objection, which led, in the case of Jack, to a new trial. These circumstances showed that both the form and substance of justice had been violated at St. Mary's. At St. Mary's the men were put on their trial without all these formalities. The charge was vague and indefinite, and they were thus condemned on evidence which would not have been thought sufficient in this country to convict the basest of mankind of the smallest penal offence. In one brief tropical day, eight miserable men were put upon their trials, and before the sun went down they were no longer living. Undefended, unpitied, and almost untried, they were hurried to their untimely graves, to gratify the headlong impatience of those who wished for eight executions before Christmas! And was the House of Commons to look on at proceedings such as these, and say nothing through fear of casting an imputation on the constituted judicature of Jamaica? If that court of judicature and the governor of the island, had proceeded as no men ought to proceed, were they to be supported by an English House of Commons? Were we to be told to seal our lips, and shut our ears, against the dying groans of our fellow-men, because, forsooth, we might give offence to persons in place and power? If the House felt as he knew they must feel, he was sure they would not be satisfied, unless they passed a censure on this constituted judicature. But if the proceedings of this judicial body were influenced by their apprehensions, the same could not be said of the governor, who was at a distance, and could not be affected by that array of fears which existed among the people at St. Mary's. Those fears were local; and if they afforded a justification of the people on the

spot, they afforded no earthly pretence of justification, no extenuation whatever, of the rash, the headlong impatience of the governor. He received the statement of the trial, read the vague charges, compared the evidence given on one and the same day, varying and contradictory as it was. He was at a distance, surrounded by his council, his secretary, and his law officers, accessible to give their opinions; and he, too, would give these unhappy men no breathing time, would allow them no respite, but by the return of the messenger, despatched instructions that they should be executed forthwith. The decree had gone forth; and, were they innocent or were they guilty, executed they must be before Christmas. The other case was that in which Leon and George were capitally convicted on the evidence of Corberand. This man, on his own statement, was an accomplice. His evidence was not only unconfirmed by any corroborating circumstance, but there was every reason to believe that it was false; yet, on this most doubtful and unsupported evidence, the governor, with that impatience which characterized all these unhappy proceedings, ordered one of the two prisoners to be instantly executed. After these statements, was it too much to ask if the censure, the heaviest censure, of the House, should not fall upon the guilty parties? Let no false delicacy—no effort to screen individuals of rank and power—prevent the expression of the heaviest censure. It was due to the House, it was due to the country, to pass such a vote, and he was convinced that it would lead to the most beneficial results. It would then go forth to our settlements abroad, that those in power there must not dare to use that power in an intemperate and precipitate manner. He did not wish to employ harsh expressions towards those on whose conduct he had felt it his duty to animadvert; and therefore, agreeing with his hon. and gallant friend, the member for Southwark, in most of his observations, he could not go the length of his gallant friend, and apply to these unhappy proceedings the term of "authorized murders." He considered the proceedings to be a violation of the law, and the covictions to be a gross violation of justice; and if men were placed in a situation where they could be excited by their own apprehensions to commit such acts, and where the system was such that they could commit them with impunity, it was so much the more necessary that the House should express a strong opinion on their conduct. If men were placed in a situation in which they might, under the influence of some momentary passion, lend themselves to the commission of irrevocable measures, involving no less than the life and death of individuals, it behoved the House the more strongly to express an opinion which might prevent the recurrence of similar conduct. The House was bound to show the world, that, if justice and mercy were duties, it was no less a duty in those intrusted with power to retain their self-possession and firmness; and it was no less imperiously required of them, not to allow themselves to be led away by a panic or terror, under the influence of which they might shed, or, as in this case, sanction the shedding of innocent blood. He should not have thought that he had done his duty if he had not stated his reasons for maintaining that these proceedings ought not to pass the ordeal of parliament unreprobated; for, if it should once go out to the West Indies, that this system of monstrous cruelty and injustice could with impunity be perpetrated again and again, as long as the system lasted would such acts be repeated without compunction, and justified by past tolerance, and in vain could they hope or look for the correction of such inveterate evils.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, that if the hon. and learned gentleman, who had just sat down, could not suffer this motion to pass without recording his abhorrence of the system which had led to it, neither could he (Mr. Canning) consent to vote for the amendment which, by preference, he would place upon the hon. and learned mover's resolutions, without at the same time recording, that it was not from yielding to him in any one of the general sentiments of indignation which he had used respecting the whole colour of this transaction that he had come to a different conclusion, but that on grounds of a more limited nature he preferred giving his concurrence to the amendment rather than the original motion. Indeed, he thought the hon. and learned gentleman who spoke last had himself admitted—at least to that extent went the principles which he had laid down—that to the original resolutions he could not grant an undivided concurrence [no, no]. Such was certainly the tendency of the hon. and learned gentleman's argument; for he had declared

himself not prepared to give an ungraduated reception to the uniform expression of complaint, which pervaded his hon. and learned friend's resolutions—he was not prepared to give one sweeping affirmative to the charge of violated justice and perverted law, upon trials, in the description of which it was one great and leading part of his speech to separate and discriminate. The hon. and learned gentleman, doubtless, in order to aggravate one case, had quoted another, which did not, in his conception, partake of the same repulsive character. He had contrasted the proceedings at St. Mary's with those at St. George's and Hanover, marking distinctly the differences between them, and admitting candidly and frankly, that in the one there had been an observance of form, a cautious delicacy of proceeding, widely different from the other. Indeed, so clear had the hon. and learned gentleman himself drawn the line, that if his speech had been the preface of a motion on the subject, it would have applied very differently to each of the three cases which were involved in the present inquiry. But while this discrimination was essential for coming to an understanding upon the original motion, it was quite otherwise in the view taken by the amendment; and on that account, were it for no other, he greatly preferred it; for there, whatever might be the shades of difference as to the colouring of the facts, the only proposition pressed into their consideration, was, that they collected from the whole of these proceedings additional cause for feeling regret at the existence of distinctions in the law, as in its operation it affected the lives of the white and the black population of his majesty's colonies. That these distinctions in the laws for shedding the blood of two classes of persons, only differing in colour, ought not to endure, he, for one, most readily admitted. Such a system of law called for, and required, considerable alteration; and it was the principle of that reform which he was ready to embody in the amendment that should have his support. Indeed, there was no considerable substantive difference between the original motion and the amendment; for their object was alike, though they aimed, by different degrees, to arrive at its accomplishment. Indeed, if the hon. and learned mover's resolutions had run thus, "That the attention of this House being called to the consideration of certain judicial proceedings in the island of Jamaica, on the trials of slaves for rebellious conspiracy, in the years 1823 and 1824, had deemed it their duty to express in the strongest terms their deep regret at their occurrence, and could not refrain from declaring a conviction of the necessity for an effectual reform of the administration of criminal justice respecting the slave population of that island." To such a resolution he should at once have agreed. But then came these words, "sorrow and indignation at the violation of law displayed therein," and that, "they deeply lament the sentences of death, wholly unwarranted by proof." From these expressions he must, he repeated, dissent; for he was not prepared to affirm by his vote, that these trials were marked by a violation of law, and a perversion of justice—that sentences of death had been precipitated. These were propositions which he could not, upon the facts before him, affirm. He was nevertheless prepared to concede that this system of law was utterly unfit to exist; he was prepared to follow up this concession by a pledge that it should be altered; but he could not go on and pass condemnatory resolutions upon those who, in the discharge of their duty (and a painful duty it must have been), were acting under the known provisions of an existing code of laws. To charge them with these crimes while so engaged, was both extravagant and untrue; and yet that was the proposition involved in the original motion.—He would pursue the same line of classifying his opinions which the hon. and learned gentleman had pointed out to him in the framing of his resolutions. He had already declared, that he could not consent to affirm such a proposition as he had just described; nor was he prepared to admit the precipitate execution of the sentences. That was a charge which obviously included two parties—the judges who pronounced the sentence, and the local government that had confirmed it. With respect to the former, they had the power, if they thought fit, to order the prisoners to instant execution, without awaiting any reference to the government; but they did not do so; they declined to avail themselves of this power, and unnecessarily (he used the words in a legal, not a moral sense) reserved the sentence for the governor's confirmation. So that the bare recital of the fact showed not only the charge of precipitancy to be untrue, but

to be directly false as applied to the proceedings of the judges; for they who had the power to order immediate execution had stayed the exercise of it, and referred the judgment to the governor. Then as to the charge respecting the governor, how did that stand? The duke of Manchester was, it should be recollected, acting in his judicial station, as the representative of the Crown, in possession of the high prerogative of mercy. The argument upon the exercise of that prerogative, from its very statement, could only become a question, after the ends of justice were satisfied. He could not conceive, by way of example, a more formidable question to have been mooted, than the remission or non-remission of punishment by the prerogative of the Crown, or its deputy: it was at once to launch into argument upon the most delicate of all human responsibilities; it was to probe a prerogative, the exercise of which must, from the nature of things, be left to the conscience of him who was invested with it. To his sense of justice, and of the deep and awful responsibility of its duties, this trust must be consigned. It must unquestionably be left to his breast unfettered, or it must be taken away. Were they to make a matter of such delicacy a debateable question in that House, they would destroy the essence of the prerogative, and impair its vitality and obligation. He should never, he hoped, be forced in that place to give an opinion upon the non-exercise of this prerogative; and a fortiori, he would not call for its condemnation in the manner now proposed. He meant not to blame the hon. and learned mover for the course he had taken, though he assured him if he had thought fit to communicate his resolutions to him before this debate, he should have felt much more satisfaction at trying how far he could have agreed with him, than in framing or concurring in, at the last hour before he entered the House, a resolution such as he could sanction, by way of amendment to the hon. and learned gentleman's proposition. Nay, he would go further and say, that if his resolution were not so strongly drawn up, and did not contain propositions which were as untrue as, he believed, they were dangerous, he should have even gone more to conciliate the feelings of the gentlemen opposite, than perhaps the nature of the case called for—he would have gone as far as could be, to satisfy all just feelings between man and man; and, under all the peculiar circumstances of the occurrence, to have called for that expression of the opinion of parliament, which would have been as good, in the way of example, as any specific censure, and at the same time would have wholly avoided the dangerous precedent of that House passing a formal censure upon judicial proceedings, which did not appear to have outstepped the letter or spirit of the law. The preferable motion which had occurred to him was as follows, "That this House, sees in the proceedings which have been brought under its consideration, with respect to the late trials of slaves in Jamaica, further proof of the evils inseparably attendant upon a state of slavery, and derives therefrom increased conviction of the propriety of the resolutions passed on the 16th of May, 1823." They would thus be showing the working of an imperfect system of law, and then quickening the necessary desire to bring such a state of things to an end. But, after he had seen the hon. and learned gentleman's motion, he had added the following to his orginal resolution; viz., "But that, however desirable it is that the laws under which the late trials took place should be amended, it does not appear to this House to be expedient or safe, to impeach sentences passed by competent tribunals, upon persons brought to trial according to law, and convicted by a jury empanelled and sworn to give a verdict according to evidence laid before them." He particularly wished the last sentence to be preserved, because it recorded the reasons why he could not agree in the sweeping censure pronounced by the original motion. He was most anxious that his difference in opinion from the hon. and learned gentleman should be confined to the prudence, the expediency, the safety, of censuring by a parliamentary vote, judicial proceedings conducted according to a system of existing law. It was to save the House from establishing such a precedent that he was anxious to have the amendment adopted; because while it would sufficiently tend to correct these disgusting tribunals, it would not create a precedent which might hereafter be used, to affect other courts very differently constituted. In the moral estimate of these transactions, he concurred with the hon. and learned gentleman, but he could not concur in his legal inferences. The transactions were monstrous and disgusting

enough, but they were not corrupt or illegal. He would not follow hon. gentlemen into their details; indeed, he was not competent to do so, neither did he care to touch such topics, for the purpose of blunting the edge of any susceptible man's feeling, or of insinuating that he did not himself participate in them, but to prevent the dangerous adoption of a precedent so convertible to purposes hereafter which they might all have to deplore. In endeavouring, while he delivered these opinions, to impose a bridle on his own feelings, he did not wish to restrain those of others, but to ward off a precedent, which, in other times, might lead to the worst consequences.

Mr. *Denman* claimed the indulgence of the House while he briefly replied to some of the observations of the hon. gentlemen opposite. In the first place, he must deny that he had withheld from them any knowledge of his particular motion. On the contrary, more than a fortnight ago, he had communicated its import fully. Still, he felt so strong a desire that their decision should go forth unanimously, that he begged to assure the right hon. gentleman, no partiality to any particular phraseology of his own would prevent the adoption of his amendment, could he consent with any sense of justice, to compromise the imperative duty which that House owed to the country, in maintaining and guarding the due administration of justice. He had early in the evening regretted his inability to do justice to this subject, and had anticipated that his defects would be abundantly repaired by his hon. and learned friends who followed him. The hon. gentlemen opposite had also come to his aid, so as greatly to narrow the point in contention. Upon all the strong points they were clearly agreed, and were now only disputing upon a quibbling fallacy. It was broadly stated, that the lamentable proceedings which he had detailed were by the laws of Jamaica justified. He would reply, no, and he spoke from the Jamaica code, which, through the courtesy of the Colonial Secretary, he held in his hand. In what part of this code were they bound to bring these parties to trial within two days? Why try them without the assistance of counsel, without having the opportunity of calling a single witness? In what page was it prescribed, that eight men should be tried and convicted before one and the same jury? Where was it enjoined that a wife should be admitted a witness against her husband? The common law of Jamaica was the same as the common law of England. Then why this dissonance in the practice? The thing was monstrous, and justified and called for the terms which he had applied to it in his resolutions. He denied that there was any thing in the Jamaica code which could sanction these atrocities. But it seemed that this woman was not the unhappy man's wife in the legal acceptation, but a woman with whom he had cohabited. She had, however, stated the contrary at the trial; and he would say that the common law was violated in the unnatural admission of her testimony. The principles of justice had been sacrificed, because the law of nature had been invaded, the solemn obligations of kindred had been trampled under foot. He admitted the justice of his hon. and learned friend's discrimination, as to the classes of these slaves; but, taking them altogether, was there not a gross violation of law, and a perversion of justice in the whole proceedings? Persons were tried and condemned on the testimony of witnesses not sworn, and on hearsay—a wife had been adduced as evidence against her husband—the executions had been indecently precipitated. All these were perversions of law—all of them clearly supported his resolution—and the House would abandon its duty if it adopted any thing short of it. Then as to the judges, it was said that they had not been precipitate, and they had almost been praised for not ordering immediate execution, but referring the sentence to the governor. It was a lame cause which required this sort of bolstering. The juries were certainly the least blameable, because they had been misled by the judges. And who was the chief judge in this case? The military commander, who headed the troops which surrounded the Court—who was anxious to have executions before Christmas—who condemned these poor creatures on such unheard-of testimony—and who was said not to have been precipitate, because, forsooth, he did not order instant execution, but referred the sentence to the governor—then came the defence of the governor. It was said that it would be most dangerous to interfere with the exercise of the prerogative of extending or withholding mercy. But he maintained, that it was not a question of mercy, but of justice; for the governor

was bound, in justice, not to have ordered execution in such a case. Suppose a case had come before the Secretary for the Home Department, where persons had been condemned upon evidence clearly bad and insufficient; would he, in such a case, advise execution without further inquiry; and that too, in order to have execution done, and an example made before a certain day? Then his resolution called for a reform—of what? Not of the law, though that doubtless required it, but of the administration of criminal justice in the island. But they were told, that the system of law ought to bear all the blame. Was it to be endured, that public functionaries should thus carry unjust sentences into execution in such a precipitate manner, and that the House should do nothing more than coolly say, that all the blame rested with the system? Where were the checks that were justly to be expected from the controlling superintendence of an English governor, endowed with prerogative, possessing the sympathies of national feeling, and the education and habits of the high rank in which he moved? Should they not expect to see him wield his authority for the protection of the weak, from the violence of the mighty, instead of lending the influence of his power to sanction oppression and injustice? If any thing in the arguments of the right hon. gentlemen opposite more particularly called on him not to consent to substitute the amendment for his own resolution, it was the observation of one of them who had long been connected with the colonies, who said he was afraid that if censure were passed upon judicial proceedings regularly carried on, it would establish a dangerous precedent. But, was the House prepared to say, that it never would inquire into any judicial proceedings, in which, although the essence of justice had been violated, the forms had been complied with? If they were, he must protest against a doctrine so unconstitutional. Whatever forms were observed towards these eight slaves, the substance of justice had been denied them, and eight men were consigned to death who ought not to have suffered. It was proved, that four of them were convicted on the evidence of a perjured rogue and robber, and that one of them was executed after the governor was aware of the infamy of the witness. If they were to be told, that it was neither safe nor expedient to pass censure on those who duly acted under the solemn obligations of judges and jurors, why then had the cases of Russel and Sidney, and other murdered victims of arbitrary power, been revised and reversed? Had they not been tried according to law, before judges and juries, closely observing judicial forms? If the doctrine now insisted upon had been enforced by our ancestors, how could they have wiped off the foul stigma of these murders from the national character? He would no further trespass on the time of the House, than to say, that the government must bring this system of judicial abuse to an end, unless they were prepared to make a mockery of their whole proceedings. He could not adopt the amendment, because his conscience told him, that he ought not to bestow a qualified praise upon individuals, on the ground that what they had done was not in violation of law.

The House divided on Mr. Denman's motion; Ayes 63; Noes 103; Majority against the motion 40.

List of the Minority.

Acland, sir T.
Allen, J. H.
Althorp, viscount.
Attwood, M.
Benett, J.
Birch, J.
Brougham, H.
Burdett, sir F.
Butterworth, J.
Buxton, T. F.
Calcraft, J.
Calthorp, hon. F.
Cavendish, C.
Cavendish, H.
Colborne, N. R.
Cole, sir C.
Corbett, P.
Crompton, S.
Davies, T. H.
Duncannon, viscount
Evans, W.
Fergusson, sir R. C.
Gaskell, B.
Guise, sir B. W.
Heathcote, G. J.
Heron, sir R.
Hobhouse, J. C.
Honywood, W.
Kemp, T. R.
Leycester, R.
Lushington, Dr.
Marjoribanks, S.
Martin, J.
Milton, viscount
Newman, R. W.
Ord, W.
Palmer, C. F.
Pares, T.
Pelham, J. C.
Philips, G.
Philips, G. S.
Poyntz, W. S.
Rice, T. S.
Robarts, A.
Robinson, sir G.
Rumbold, C.
Russell, lord W.
Sebright, sir J.
Smith, J.
Smith, W.
Sykes, D.
Taylor, M. A.
Tierney, rt. hon. G.
Tomes, J.
Tremayne, J. H.
Tulk, C. A.
Vivian, sir R.
Wall, C. B.
Webb, E.
Whitbread, S.
Whitmore, W. W.
Williams, J.
Wilson, sir R.
Wilson, W. W.
Wood, M.
Wyvill, M.

TELLERS.

Denman, T.
Nugent, lord.

After the division, Mr. Brougham, referring to the course and temper of the discussion, suggested the propriety of cutting off the latter part of the amendment relative to the inexpediency of impeaching the verdict of the court, being all that part which followed the words "the year 1823." Mr. Canning assented to the suggestion, and it was agreed nem. con. to alter the amendment accordingly.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Friday, March 3.

CORN LAWS.] Lord *King* rose to present a petition against the most gigantic of all jobs. It came from the working community of Manchester and its neighbourhood, and was signed by 40,000 persons, and would have been signed by 20,000 more, had it not been for the delay and expense of collecting them. He thought that the character of that House would depend on the result of their lordships' determination respecting the Corn-laws. In coming to this question, their lordships ought to recollect, that the public were very good judges, not only of the value of their decisions, but of the motives of them also. The petitioners stated, that the Corn-laws were made for the benefit of the landlords; but in that House it was always argued, that those laws were established for the benefit of the public; and those who were most forward in maintaining this doctrine, were among the persons who contended for unlimited trade in every other respect. The people, however, were now too well informed on the subject, and their lordships must expect to draw very largely on public credulity, if they thought they could make it be believed that those laws were for any body's benefit but the landowners. Some noble lords, however, objected very much to "little harangues" on corn, and wished to have nothing said on the subject, except in a real debate, in which they might sport all the variety of their ingenuity. These great orators were like those sportsmen who wished to abstain from shooting occasionally, in order to have one great shooting day. Others, on the contrary, chose to shoot every day in the year, and he believed that, in the end, they killed more than those who reserved themselves for one great annual battle. When the great debate day did come, he had no doubt that some noble lords would endeavour to prove that the real interests of the manufacturers and labourers consisted in eating the dearest corn, and in being confined to the narrowest market. To him nothing could be more absurd than this; for when the price of corn was made dear, the labour of those who consumed it must be increased, as they could not get proportionate wages. There could be no greater injustice than this, and he believed nothing was so likely to diffuse angry feelings, and separate the labouring community from the owners of property. He was therefore most anxious that the subject should be gone into without loss of time.

Ordered to lie on the table.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, March 3.

SLAVERY IN THE COLONIES.] Mr. *Brougham* rose for the purpose of asking the hon. Secretary for the Colonies, whether any act of the legislature of St. Vincent's on the subject of improving the condition of the slaves, had recently arrived in this country, and whether it was of that character which would cause its being allowed by the government here? He was anxious that information should be given to the House on the subject of any recent advices received of the proceedings of the colonial legislatures; for, as far as he had been able to ascertain, the statement of the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs as to the course which some of those legislatures had adopted, was not borne out by the facts that had transpired in this country.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, that a bill had been received in this country which had been introduced in the colonial assembly of St. Vincent's. It had been read a second time, and ordered to be committed; and he supposed that ere now it had been passed into a law. This and all the other acts which had emanated from the colonial legislatures would be laid before the House. His right hon. friend had not stated, that in the acts of any of the colonies the whole of the points mentioned in the Orders in Council had been embraced. Many of them had, however, been introduced.

Mr. *Brougham* said, he had no wish to impute any intentional misstatement on the subject. He was aware that the accounts that had been received were as yet imperfect; but undoubtedly there did ap-

pear to him a discrepancy between the statement made by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the accounts which had yet arrived in this country. The right hon. Secretary had said, that some measures had been adopted for facilitating the manumission of slaves, where they had the means of purchasing it, that was, that a power should be given to appraise the slave without the consent of the owner, and on that appraisement that the slave should, if he could make good the sum at which he was appraised, be manumitted. Upon this point, he could not find that any measure of the exact description alluded to had been introduced by the colonial assemblies. The next point on which the House was told that an improvement had taken place, was that of the discontinuance of the whip as a badge of authority and stimulus to labour in the hands of overseers and drivers; but, upon this he could not discover that any step had been taken, except by the legislatures of St. Vincent's. The next point was the admissibility of slave-evidence. The statement of the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs on this point was, that out of twelve of the colonies which had legislatures (indeed it might be said out of thirteen, for, including Honduras, there were thirteen with local legislatures) seven had adopted measures for the admission of negro evidence. Now, what might be the contents of the papers recently received from the West Indies, he did not know; but from all the inquiries he had been able to make, and after consulting the public papers which had reached this country, detailing the proceedings of the colonies, as late as the 22nd of November last, he could learn, that only three of the islands had passed any acts for the admission of slave evidence. These were Dominica, Tobago, and Barbadoes. The act of Dominica had been passed eight years ago; so that that could not be received as evidence of any disposition of the islands to act upon the Order in Council. There were thus only two islands which had passed any bill in accordance with the Order in Council. Tobago had passed such a measure; and to let the House see how far it entered into the spirit of the orders sent out, he would state how far it carried the principle of receiving slave evidence. The evidence of a slave was to be admitted only in the single case of murder of a slave committed by a white man, and even that admission was to be contingent, upon two circumstances; namely, that there were none other but slaves present when the crime was committed, and that the testimony of the party admitted as evidence should be corroborated by that of two slaves of unimpeached character. These regulations, and some others included in the act, rendered it so objectionable that it was disallowed by the government here; so that, for any practical good, it was worth nothing. In the act passed in Barbadoes, slave evidence was admitted, provided the witness produed a certificate of instruction in his religious duties; not, as had been most properly recommended in the instructions sent out from the government here, which admitted the certificate from the religious minister of any Christian denomination, duly licensed to preach and teach, but from the clergy of the established church only. This was the only condition on which a slave could be admitted as evidence in Barbadoes; but it was a qualification of his admissibility, involving such a mockery of justice, that the act itself was most properly disallowed by his Majesty's government. From all he had been able to learn, it appeared, that since the passing of the resolutions by the House of Commons on the 15th of May, 1823, only two islands, Tobago and Barbadoes, had passed any measure for admitting slave evidence; and these were clogged with such conditions and qualifications as caused both to be disallowed at home; so that, in fact, on that point nothing practicable had yet been done.—But it was said that eight out of thirteen of the islands had taken some steps towards giving to the slaves religious instruction, and also for their more due observance of the Sabbath. From the accounts which he had seen, he did not understand that much more had been done than had been effected by the measures adopted by government, and supported by that House, of providing and sending out a sufficient number of clergymen of the established church, for the purpose of affording religious instruction; but this was a measure for which the colonies could take no credit. As to the steps taken for a more due observance of the Sabbath, he could not see what had been done, further than the substitution of a Thursday market, for that heretofore held on the Sunday; or the enabling the slaves to work in their provision-grounds on the former day instead of the latter. It was said, that five out

of the thirteen colonies had adopted measures to legalize the marriages of the negroes; but he could not discover where it was adopted, except in the Bahamas; and even there the rights of the masters might, to a certain extent, interfere. Eight of the colonies, the House was told, had adopted measures to secure the property of the slave, so as more effectually to facilitate his manumission. Unfortunately, however, manumission was left out in the instructions sent to Demerara. This was to be regretted, as it would lead the other colonies to believe that the government were not particularly anxious on that point. In the regulations arising out of the orders sent to Trinidad, there was one defect, which extended also to all the regulations made on the same point by the other colonies. It was, that, though the slaves were allowed to cultivate portions of ground for their own profit, they were prohibited from the culture of any of the staple articles of colonial produce; and thus they were precluded from the only branch of industry, by the profits of which their manumission might be greatly accelerated. In the five colonies which were said to have taken steps to prevent the separation of families by sale or otherwise, Bahama was the only one in which a practical measure had been introduced; but in Tobago the measure extended no further than preventing the mother from being separated from the child up to a certain age. That, no doubt, was good as far as it went; but it did not go far enough to justify the statement, that efficient means had been adopted in five colonies to prevent the separation of families. The House had heard, that in eight of the colonies measures, had been adopted to prevent the punishment of females. He was not aware of that being done in any island but St. Vincent's, but even there the use of the whip, as a badge of authority and a stimulus to labour, was not wholly restricted. The only one of the eight, in all of which it was said that the use of the whip had been restricted, was Tobago; in which island the number of lashes was reduced from thirty-nine to twenty. This, no doubt, would make a great difference in the scale of human sufferings, but it did not go the length to which it ought to be carried. He thought he had said enough to satisfy the House that the statement they had heard was not completely borne out by the facts of which they were yet in possession. However, to bring the matter to an issue, he would ask the hon. Secretary for the Colonies whether he would object to returns containing the titles of all the acts passed by the colonial legislatures since May 1823, for bettering the condition of the slaves? Such a return would show at once what provisions had been made by the colonial legislatures. It would show how far the statements which the House had heard had been borne out, by what had been really done; and what that something was for which the colonies were entitled to any praise.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, he was perfectly ready to agree to the proposition of the hon. and learned member. Nay, he would do more. He would lay upon the table a tabular statement of the different acts passed by the colonial legislatures, with their different clauses, so that the whole question might at one view be brought under the consideration of the House. It would be some time before this could be done, owing partly to the great increase of business in the colonial department, arising out of the recent discussions respecting the slave question, and partly to the illness of the colonial counsel, which had been brought on by the severe application to the duties of his office. He must take that opportunity of stating, that the hon. member for Aberdeen, by his economy, had been chiefly instrumental in preventing the public departments from being manned in a way necessary for the efficient discharge of their duty. It would be much better, if the present system were not altered, for the House to pass a resolution to absolve the public departments from all responsibility. The colonial counsel had been employed in his office during the whole of last year, not less than ten hours a day. That was too much for any man. Unless the House would furnish him with assistance, the public business must, in a case of illness, stand still. He pledged himself, when the colonial estimates should be brought forward, to show that it was impossible that the public business could be transacted without an augmented establishment. With respect to Demerara, the court of policy of that colony deserved great praise for the readiness with which they had adopted the recommendations of the Order in Council. The hon. and learned member was mistaken when he stated, that the slaves in none of the colonies were permitted to cultivate staple commodities They had that privilege

in Demerara. He did not feel it necessary to enter into the subject at greater length until the papers were before the House. He had every reason to believe that the Order in Council would, in about a fortnight, be the substantial law in St. Lucia, the Cape of Good Hope, Berbice, and the Mauritius.

Mr. *Hume* said, that though it was paying the hon. Secretary no compliment, he must declare that he had not been listening to his speech until he had roused him by accusing him of impeding the public service. He really had a right to expect a very different treatment from the hon. Secretary; for last year he had allowed an increase of 1,700*l.* in the estimate for the colonial department to pass without observation. The increase was made for the purpose of giving a salary to Mr. Stephen, who was appointed colonial counsel. Nothing could be more objectionable to the colonies than such an appointment. He was the son of the person whom the colonists supposed to be their greatest enemy; and to put him in an office in which every communication to and from the colonies must pass through his hands, was highly objectionable. The appointment had outraged the feelings of the colonists more than any other act of the government

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* doubted whether the gentlemen in that House who belonged to the profession of the law would accede to the doctrine which the hon. member seemed desirous to establish; namely, that a counsel would allow his private feelings to impede the performance of his public duty. He, in his conscience, believed what he had heard Mr. Stephen himself state, that, on any subject connected with the West-Indian interests, he had never had any communication, direct or indirect, with his father. There was no man to whom, if he wished for advice or information on subjects of difficulty connected with the West Indies, he would sooner apply than Mr. Stephen. The hon. member seemed to labour under a complete mistake as to the duties of Mr. Stephen's office. He was merely an executive officer, and could originate nothing. He might state as a proof that there was no sort of understanding between the father and son, that the former had published a pamphlet in which he called the Order in Council, which was drawn up by his son, a "parcel of trash." He was glad that he had been presented with an opportunity of stating, for the satisfaction of persons connected with the West Indies, that Mr. Stephen was merely an executive officer, and could do no more than obey the instructions of the head of the department.

Mr. *F. Buxton* felt it necessary to say, that Mr. Stephen never made any communications to him. On the contrary, he generally found that gentleman so very reserved, that he preferred transacting business with the hon. secretary.

Mr. *Brougham* then moved, for the "titles of acts passed by the legislatures of the slave colonies since 15th May, 1823, and containing any provisions for promoting the religious instruction of the slaves, or the better observance of the Sabbath; distinguishing the names of the colonies, the dates of the acts, the numbers of the sections in which such provisions are contained, and specifying whether the same acts had been allowed or disallowed by, or are now under the consideration of, the king in council"—Ordered.

ARMY ESTIMATES.] On the order of the day for going into a committee of supply.

Colonel *Davies* said, that, in opposing the motion for the Speaker leaving the chair, he could assure the House, he was far from being actuated by any spirit of factious opposition. Thus much he wished at the outset to claim for himself and for his party, who had always been disposed to support a system of liberal policy. He had shown that his own disposition was not unfavourable to such a system, when he, last year, withdrew his opposition to the estimates of the noble lord. But the circumstances of the country had been greatly altered since that period, and in the present crisis, when the nation was labouring under the pressure of general distress, it was the duty of every member, to see that the burthens imposed upon his constituents were as light as possible. Besides this consideration, there were objections to the condition of the army as constituted at present, which did not apply to it, when the noble lord came down with his propositions last year. If the motion with which he intended to conclude, should be agreed to, which was for a select committee to inquire into the military expenditure of the country, he had no objection to vote for a committee of supply, to grant such a sum as would

suffice to carry on the operations of the present year, subject to such reductions as should afterwards appear advisable to the select committee. He saw no less objectionable mode of opposing a committee of supply. It was absolutely necessary, in his opinion, to curtail our present overgrown military establishment; and, in so saying, he did not mean to impute any peculiar blame to his majesty's ministers; for, if his own party were in power, he was sure they would pursue exactly the same course, unless they were closely watched. The gallant officer then proceeded to institute a comparison between the number of troops employed in 1822 and 1825. In the former year, the total number employed, at home and abroad, was 71,800; in 1825, 86,893. He next proceeded to shew, in minute detail, that the military forces of France were larger, in proportion, than those of England; that the British troops in Canada were nearly as numerous as the whole army of the United States, and that many reductions might be made in several colonial garrisons. He recommended that colonial corps should be raised instead of sending troops from this country, which occasioned a heavy expense. If the colonial resources were properly managed, and the pensioners on them were got rid of, he thought they might be fully available for defraying the cost of their governments. He considered that the mode in which the militia in this country was called out created a serious expense, without any real benefit to them. He adverted to the figure they made when in the field, like Falstaff's ragged regiment. Instead of the present mode, he thought that a portion of them should be called out and embodied for a longer time. The hon. member then took a short view of the whole of our expenditure, and compared it with that of France, where forty millions covered the whole of their annual expenditure, including not only army, ordnance, navy, &c. but also payment to the clergy, the poor, the making of roads, &c. If war should break out, ministers would find themselves unprepared to meet the expenses unless they had recourse to a more economical system of expenditure, and their difficulties would be increased by the measures which they were now pursuing with respect to the currency. He concluded by moving. "That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the whole Military Expenditure of the country."

Lord *Palmerston* said, he would not follow the hon. gentleman through the various statements into which he had entered. He did not think he had assigned any sufficient reason for the appointment of a select committee. The only ground stated for the motion was, that the committee might inquire into the military expenditure. Now, the usual course was, to discuss the various items in a committee of the whole House, when there was a sufficient opportunity of fully considering every point. He must therefore oppose the amendment, and the hon. member must forgive him for not replying at present to his observations.

The amendment was negatived, and the House having resolved itself into the committee, to which the Army Estimates were referred,

Lord *Palmerston* said, he felt convinced that all who had heard the motion of the hon. member for Worcester would have supposed, that the estimates of the army to be proposed to the House, contained some remarkable increase over those which had been voted in the preceding year. The fact, however, was, that the estimates which he was about to submit to the committee, were the same as those of the last year, with the addition only of three hundred men, constituting three companies, for the service of the colony of Newfoundland, and to be paid for by the inhabitants of that settlement. The total increase upon the estimates was only 126,586*l.* 4*s.* 8*d.* of which 84,000*l.* arose from the circumstance of the change that had taken place in the currency of Ireland; and the remainder, amounting to 42,000*l.* arose from the circumstance of certain items in the preceding estimates being charged only for the three last quarters of the year, commencing in April, whereas, in the present estimates, the items were charged for the whole year. In the first class of the present estimates, which comprised all the active establishments of our military force, consisting of the staff, the yeomanry, the medical staff, and every other description of efficient force, there was a total increase above the last year of 104,257*l.* 2*d.* arising from the two causes to which he had already alluded. The increase of charge upon the land forces was 194,559*l.* 5*s.* 1*d.*; upon the staff there was a total increase of 2,620*l.* 3*s.* 11*d.* of which 1,000*l.* arose from the change of the currency of Ireland; and the remaining sum of 1,620*l.* arose from an augmentation

of the medical staff, employed upon the coast of Africa. There was a diminution of expense upon the medical staff at home, both in England and Ireland, of 941*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.* In the public department over which he presided, the War-office, there was a diminution of expense to the amount of 947*l.* 11*s.* 5*d.* With reference to that branch of the department whose duty it was to examine the arrears of accounts, he was happy to say, that considerable progress had been made in bringing up the arrears. He was aware that great reductions might be made in this branch of the service, and he could assure the House that they should be carried into effect, to the greatest possible extent, as soon as the object could be attained consistently with the interests of the public service. In the medical department, there was a diminution of 941*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.* which arose from the conversion of the Royal Military Infirmary into an hospital. If this arrangement had not been made, there would have been an increase of 1,000*l.* to the estimates of the present year. He should now come to the volunteer force. In this service there was an increase amounting to 8,966*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* This augmentation of expense over the charge of last year arose from the circumstance, that it was expected that most of the yeomanry force would be on permanent duty, during the present year, and which was not the case in the year just terminated. This was the sole reason for the increase of expense; for, as to the number of men, there had been a diminution to the extent of eight hundred; and a saving also had been effected, under the head of contingent allowances. But it had been thought necessary that an increase of allowance should hereafter be made to the men composing the remaining corps, during the time they should be called out on permanent duty. This allowance would extend only to the privates and non-commissioned officers. The former allowance had been at the rate of 5*s.* a day, for man and horse; and when it was considered that the men were usually assembled for only a few days at a time, it would be easily conceived that they had not the opportunities of making such economical and advantageous arrangements, as soldiers who were stationed for any long or certain period in one neighbourhood. The House, he conceived, would agree with him, that, under these circumstances, the former rate of allowance of five shillings a day was inadequate. The present proposal was, to augment the allowance by two shillings a day, making the total allowance to the private and non-commissioned officers of yeomanry corps amount to seven shillings per diem, whilst they were on actual duty. This increase of allowance would augment this branch of the estimates by 8,966*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* He would not advert to the second class of Indian expenditure, but would proceed to the third class, on which there was an augmentation to the extent of 23,731*l.* First, there was an increase under the head of pay of staff officers, to the extent of 5,341*l.* 3*s.* 9*d.* partly arising from the change in the value of the Irish currency. The expenses of the Royal Military College were the same as last year. In the charge for garrisons there was no material variation, and in the charge of full pay for reduced, retired, and unattached officers, there was a diminution of 7,500*l.* occasioned by casualties, and which would have been 500*l.* more, but for the change that had been made in the Irish currency. There was also a diminution on the charge of half-pay and reduced allowances to officers of foreign corps of 2,414*l.* The next head of service was the estimate of the charge on account of the in-pensioners of Chelsea hospital, and in this service there was an increase of 301*l.* 11*d.* In the estimate of the charge of the out-pensioners, there was an increase of 44,653*l.* 5*d.* in consequence of additional expenses incurred under the head of casualties. The estimate ot the charge of the Royal Military Asylum was pretty nearly the same as that of the preceding year. Under the head of widow's pensions, there was an increase of 6,670*l.* 6*d.* The next item in the estimates was the compassionate list, and allowances to officers for wounds. Under this head there was an increase of 4,190*l.* of which 500*l.* arose from the difference made in the Irish currency. On the superannuation, or retired allowance account, there was a diminution of charge, amounting to 1,759*l.* 14*s.* 1*d.* The amount of Exchequer fees continued the same. On the account of the three royal veteran battalions, there was a diminution of 3,958*l.* 3*s.* 3*d.* The estimates for the corps were calculated to the 24th of March only, as, in the course of the ensuing month of April, it was intended that they should be disbanded.—He had now gone through the estimates, taking each head of expenditure *seriatim*, and had only to advert to the total amount of the charges

for the army for the present year, as compared with the amount of the same head of national service for the year 1825. The vote for the army for the year, from the 25th Dec. 1824, to the 24th Dec. 1825, was for the support of 76,345 men; the estimates for the present year, ending 24th Dec. 1826, were for 76,572 men. The total of the estimates for the year 1825, was 6,475, 547*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.*; for the present year the amount was 6,602,133*l.* 17*s.*, making a total increase for the present year of 126,586*l.* 4*s.* 8*d.* The number of land forces had been increased last session, not only with the general concurrence of the House, but with the particular assent of the hon. member for Worcester himself (colonel Davies); and he was, therefore, surprised at the hon. member's opposing the going into a committee, on the ground of unnecessary and extravagant expenditure, and of an improper number of forces. The only criterion by which the House could judge what forces ought to be kept up at the present period, was the exigencies of the service at the period for which they were required, and not the necessities that might have existed in 1792, or at any antecedent period. The colonial service of the country required a large force in actual employ, and the government were bound to take into consideration the necessity of having a disposable reserve. The exercising of the forces was necessary for a constant relief. Thus the troops were constantly prepared, and in a fit condition to be sent on service as the exigences of the case might require. The hon. member for Worcester had stated, that the colonial garrisons were too great; but it would be impossible to dispense with much of the regular army, by substituting regular regiments instead of garrisons. If forces were commissioned for general service, it would be difficult or impossible to get men to serve in perpetual banishment in the colonies, at the same rate at which those were paid who took the chance of the service generally. Thus the expense would, in either case, be the same. But the effect of confining bodies of troops in colonies would be, to make them of an inferior description. By the present system, the troops had the benefit of general inspection, of diversified service, and of experience. By confining particular bodies of troops to particular colonies, they would lose these advantages, and become inadequate to the defence even of the posts intrusted to their protection.—The House must see that the change recommended by the hon. member in the effective force of the country, would be attended with no advantage. If we were to depend upon the militia, we might drill them, but we must have a change every year. We should have, in fact, a sort of infant army, which, ere it was fully weaned from its mother, would have to be replaced by another. It had been urged, that our colonial establishments were too large, and our settlements in North America, in particular, were pointed out as greater than they ought to be. But his hon. friend, the secretary for the colonies, was so much more competent to speak to this part of the subject than he could pretend to be, that he would leave it to him to answer this part of the hon. member's argument. The only other instance to which the hon. member alluded, was rather an unfortunate one for his argument. He stated, that we had by far too large a garrison at Gibraltar. In answer to that observation, he begged to refer to the hon. and gallant officer over the way (sir R. Wilson) who last year stated, that the garrison there was not more than sufficient, and expressed his regret, that a greater force was not employed upon that station. He should not follow the hon. member through his reviewal of the finance systems of France and America, because it was a proceeding which did not go very directly to the subject before the House; but there was one position taken up in the course of it, the truth of which he felt himself bound to deny. The hon. member had said, that it was an additional reason why we ought to make every practicable reduction, because we were now about to return to a metallic currency, and to act upon the principles of free trade. Now, as far as he understood our object in going back to a metallic currency, it was to avoid the recurrence of those distresses into which the departure from that system had, from time to time, unhappily plunged us; and our adoption of the principles of free trade was not a course which would render the country poor, and unable to bear expense, but a course which had been resolved upon from a conviction of its superior profitableness and expediency. The noble lord sat down with moving, "That a number of land forces not exceeding 87,240 men (exclusive of the men belonging to the regiments employed in the territorial possessions of the

East India Company) commissioned and non-commissioned officers included, be maintained for the service of the United kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, from the 25th Dec. 1825, to the 24th Dec. 1826."

Lord *Milton* said, that he did not feel himself placed in the situation of the hon. colonel behind him, with respect to the army estimates of this year; for last year he had voted against the estimates, and was in a minority of eight upon that occasion. Therefore his noble friend över the way could not retort upon him that he was pledged to the present estimates because of his vote of last year. The objections which he entertained against the noble lord's resolutions were of a nature to prevent him from entering into detail —he objected to them altogether as founded upon an erroneous view of the interests of the country; and he was the more confirmed in that opinion by the latter part of the speech of the noble lord, in which he had endeavoured to divert the attention of the House from looking back to the principles of policy by which, in former times, the country had been regulated. He saw clearly from that speech, that the military spirit of the government—or, more properly speaking, its disposition for keeping up a large military establishment—was far from being so subdued as, for the safety and happiness of the country, it ought to be. The latter part of the noble lord's speech showed clearly that, in the opinion of the higher authorities of this country, our security depended upon the maintenance of a large military force. Now, he was quite unconvinced that there was the least necessity for any larger establishment than the country, in former years, had been in the habit of maintaining. If our colonies had increased in one part of the world, in another part they had been diminished; because, within the last fifty years, we had lost the whole of North America? His majesty's ministers, in bringing forward the estimates, were not aware of the situation in which they placed the country. The necessary effect of such a large expenditure must be, to reduce the pecuniary resources of the country. And, if they still persisted in maintaining a large military establishment, let them recollect what they said in 1816. In that year, 100,000*l*. extra was demanded upon special grounds. In 1822 the estimates were increased in the sum of 69,000*l*. beyond 1820. In 1825, our prosperity was said to increase; and now, in 1826, the increase beyond last year was 126,000*l*. His complaint was, that ministers, in a time of peace and tranquillity, had gone on increasing our military expenditure. If the sum granted in 1822 was sufficient, why ask more for the year 1826? And if the sum now demanded was absolutely necessary, how could ministers account for the deficiency of their demand in 1822? The fact was this—the landed interest was distressed in 1822, and he would venture to predict that they would be equally distressed in 1827. It was the duty of ministers, therefore, to conciliate the country by diminishing the public expenditure in such a manner as to enable us to meet the distresses which must come in 1827. But, though he had no intention of going into details, there was one point of the noble lord's speech, which he could not help adverting to. The noble lord had said, that the allowance of 5*s*. per day was not sufficient pay for the yeomanry, and that he was going to raise the sum to 7*s*. per day. Now, talking of shillings, the same appeared small; but when he considered that the pay of the whole of the yeomanry was to be augmented nearly one-half, the amount became of more importance. For his part, he thought that the yeomanry might be done away with altogether! as the time was gone by when such a species of force could be rendered serviceable. And they were now kept up solely for the purpose of gratifying a few individuals. To his knowledge they were kept up in one county with that view, and his right hon. friend opposite was aware of the existence of the corps to which he alluded; but the country was so perfectly tranquil, as to render their presence not at all necessary. It appeared to him, that upon this head alone they might save 130,000*l*. a year. Again there were the yeomanry corps of Ireland; a body who, he would venture to say, were not only useless but mischievous. He would only say, that ministers were wrong in placing their reliance upon a large standing army. He would tell them, that if the army of the country were to be reduced to 20,000 men, they would find that the weakness of the country would not be found in the smallness of that force, but in the condition of our Stock Exchange. There it was that the weakness of the country was to be found.

What effects the recent measures adopted by ministers might produce in that quarter he could not pretend to say. They had entered into a negotiation with the Bank, in order to induce that body to advance large sums to the public; but the country did not want money, it wanted confidence, and ministers had done every thing but take measures to restore that confidence. The promulgation of the correspondence between ministers and the Bank, was the cause of much of the distress which had since taken place. They were misinformed when they stated that the panic had subsided. They would have found, if they inquired, that it continued to rage to a great degree, and the publication of that correspondence had greatly increased it. With respect to the estimates, he thought that, for the last three years, they had been framed upon the most extravagant basis. The time would come, and sooner perhaps than the country gentlemen were aware, when the military spirit now predominant would be considerably subdued.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the present situation of the country required that the most serious attention of parliament should be directed to the estimates for this year. They were now called upon to vote the first of those estimates, and the question to be considered was—was the country in a situation to pay that sum? It was very well for the noble Secretary at War to say that we were called upon to make no great increase upon the estimates of last year. But, we had gone on increasing our army expenditure, so gradually, but certainly, from year to year, that even the noble lord himself did not appear sensible of the enormous increase this year, as compared with former years. But the House ought to check this ruinous course of expenditure. Our army, navy, ordnance, and civil estimates, ought to be revised; and, in his view of the case, the whole might be reduced one half. If the House would consider for a moment to what ruinous results this enormous expenditure must lead, those who were called the representatives of the people would not vote for such large establishments as were now called for by ministers. Before they voted these estimates, they ought seriously to consider how much was absolutely necessary to carry on the establishments of the country; and he [illegible] aware that he should be charged with even [illegible] for endeavouring to point out these establishments and the sums necessary to support them. No doubt, those whose duty it was, were the fittest persons to point out such matters. But they did not do so. On the contrary, he found that the army, navy, and ordnance estimates of this year were greater than those of last year. And he would ask, whether such a state of things ought to be, now that we were in the eleventh year of peace, and had a prospect of its continuance for a long time, if we chose? Surely, one great cause of our keeping up a standing army was at an end. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Canning), since his accession to his high and important office, had, much to his honour, separated this country from that falsely-called Holy Alliance—from that body of despots, whose policy it was, to maintain large military bodies, in order to check and crush the growth of civil liberty, and encourage and protect their exercise of arbitrary power. We had, during the administration of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor, adopted this policy to a certain extent, and it was the bane of this country. But we were now separated from those continental powers, and why should we continue to adopt their policy? It appeared to him that the present system was supported chiefly by those who were maintained by, and who participated in, the spoils of the taxes, in the shape of pensions, places, &c. If those persons were called to pay these taxes, without participating in them, they would express in that House a very different opinion. They were at once the cause and effect of supporting the present large establishments; they supported them because it furnished them with places, pensions, and other emoluments; and these, in return, rendered a great expenditure necessary. Was it not monstrous to think, that we had now 27,000 officers upon retired, full, and half-pay? This was a number of individuals nearly equal to the whole amount of our army some years ago. Between 1785 and 1793, we had no more than 36,000 men, including those required for the defence of our colonies, in all. The military mania which prevailed in the country some time ago had not yet subsided; and, in order to give it countenance and support, taxes were imposed upon the industry, nay, the necessities of the people. The amount of taxes paid by the higher classes bore no proportion to what fell upon the middling

and lower orders of society. He would take, for instance, the assessed taxes, not one-third of which were paid by the higher classes; and what they did pay they received back in the shape of pay, pensions, and allowances of various descriptions. This grinding system served only to demoralize the people; and he would ask, were they prepared to say, that such a system ought to go on?

Having said thus much, by way of apology for what he was going to say, he begged to call the attention of the committee to the subject more immediately before them. He maintained that, before they proceeded further, it was their duty to appoint a committee, to inquire into every department of our revenue expenditure. In 1822, a finance committee was appointed; and what did they do? They did not confine themselves to 1822, or to any particular year, but went back to 1792, and clearly demonstrated that that period and 1816 were perfectly parallel. The noble lord said, it was perfectly ridiculous to go back to 1792. He dared to say, that the noble lord, and those who supported him, were of that opinion; but did those who paid the noble lord and his colleagues and supporters think so? The number of petitions presented to the House shewed that they did not. Those petitions, numerous as they were, would, ere long, be increased, so strong was the feeling of the country on the subject. It was impossible, without a breach of faith, to touch the 28 millions interest of the national debt; but the other 27 millions of expenditure, might be greatly reduced. For instance, the noble lord's salary of 4,000*l.* a-year might be reduced one-half, the salaries of all the other public officers might be reduced in proportion, and yet the parties would be sufficiently provided for. If that were done, he was quite satisfied, that, in the course of eighteen months, taxes might be reduced to the extent of twelve millions, affording to the country a most acceptable and just relief.

Following the labours of that committee, he would examine what steps it took; and first of all, it would be found that they drew a comparison between the years 1792 and 1821. The comparative situation of the country at those periods, was as follows:—In 1792, the whole expense of the army in Great Britain and Ireland, was only 2,330,000*l.* The charge for the Ordnance, for which alone 1,200,000*l.* were now required, was then only 440,000*l.*; the navy cost under two millions; so that the whole expense of the various establishments was 4,700,000*l.* while the country, in the present year, was loaded with four times that charge. He saw nothing in the state of the kingdom to warrant such an extraordinary augmentation; and if five millions more than was necessary could be exacted from the people, it only shewed, if reductions were duly made, how easy it would be, at any future period, by making appeals to the nation when they were unavoidable, to place it in the commanding station which it ought to hold among the powers of Europe. He really believed that the committee was not aware of what it was called upon to vote. The finance committee took a view of the condition of the country from 1785 to 1792; and he begged the House to observe, that during that whole period of peace, the average number of troops never exceeded 36,000 men; and in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, they were only 30,000. The average of the five years previous to 1792, was 33,000 men, and no more. The disembodied militia was also 33,000; yet the noble lord had not scrupled that night to call upon the committee to pass a vote for a regular army of not less than 86,764 men. The noble lord, indeed, had called it 76,000, but he had taken only rank and file, without adding the officers, who, as they were employed, must also be paid. The whole military establishment of the country in 1792, including 53,000 regular troops, and 33,000 disembodied militia, did not, in fact, exceed the number of troops now required for the standing army of the kingdom. To the 86,764 were, besides, to be added 8,446 men for the royal artillery, including engineers, 9,000 marines, three-fourths of whom were available for land service, making a total of 104,210 regular troops; which, in the eleventh year of peace, the people, in their present distress, were called upon to maintain, and when the king, in his Speech at the opening of the session, assured the parliament that, among all his neighbours, there was every disposition to preserve peace and amity!

But this was not all, for he had hitherto only spoken of the regular army, and the militia for Great Britain was 55,000, and for Ireland 22,000 men, making together 77,000, towards which the country was called upon to pay 500,000*l.* The yeomanry, by the last return, in Great Bri-

tain and Ireland, were 74,000 men, and the expense 153,000*l*., being a large increase beyond the last year. The forces at Ceylon and the Cape amounted to 4,000 or 5,000 men, and the grand total of the military establishment not less than 259,000 men, ready to be called into service on any emergency. Deducting from this number the militia and regular troops in 1792, of 86,000, there would be a positive increase of 173,000 men between 1792 and 1826. He appealed to the committee, whether such a state of things was in accordance with the recommendation of the finance committee of 1817? Before he read an extract from that document, he entreated gentlemen to attend to the distinguished men by whom it was prepared; they were, the late lord Londonderry, Mr. Bankes, Mr. Tierney, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Baring, Mr. Wilbraham, sir J. Newport, Mr. Peel, Mr. H. Davies, sir G. Clerk, Mr. Huskisson, Mr. Tremaine, Mr. N. Calvert, Mr. D. Gilbert, Mr. Holford, Mr. Gooch, and sir T. Acland. If it were necessary to re-appoint a finance committee, more proper individuals could not be named; they merited the utmost confidence, and they sat for nearly two years, and made seven reports, regarding the army, navy, ordnance, pensions, sinecures, and the general income and expenditure of the empire. Three or four of the committee were now distinguished members of the councils of his majesty; and thus having power to enforce the recommendations of the committee, he called upon them to look back to the work of their own hands, and to act in consistency with it. The words of the report were these:—

"Your Committee, in making reference to the year 1792, desire to call the notice of the House to the low establishments of the latter part of that year, which were deemed sufficient for all national purposes at that time, in the contemplation of a long continuance of peace; and, although many circumstances are materially changed by events which have subsequently taken place, so as to prevent any exact parallel from being drawn between the two cases, especially in the amount of pecuniary charge, yet they submit, that as near an approximation to that low scale of establishment and expense as may be found consistent with our more extended possessions, and with the augmented rates of various fixed disbursements, would be highly advantageous in relieving the burthens, and in supporting the public credit of the country."

Now he wished to know whether the price of stores, and of various articles connected with our military establishment, had not been very much reduced? It could not be denied, that the price had fallen greatly; and therefore it was clear, that if the scale of our military establishment was placed on its proper footing, a great saving might be effected for the country. What had taken place since 1817, to prevent such a reduction from being made? Those who were members of the House at that period, must recollect the speech of the noble lord (Castlereagh) which held out the most flattering hopes of a reduction of the national expenditure. The noble lord then observed, that the reduced establishment at which they had arrived, was not near so low as might be expected in the course of a few years; but, after the changes that had taken place—after the long war in which the country had been engaged—it was impossible to arrive at them at once. After a few years of peace, they would, of course, be brought forward. The House, at that time, went with the noble lord; but the committee went further; calculating that, in the course of a few years, the country would be relieved from a large portion of expense. He would shew, before he sat down, how, under the present system, the people had been completely deceived in the reasonable expectations held out by the committee. He should prove how all the pensions, all the fixed establishments, in short, every item of charge, instead of decreasing, had been annually increased, since the date when the delusive promise was held out. He did not blame the noble lord opposite on account of these estimates. He was the only organ employed to lay them before the House; and the censure ought to fall, not on him, but on his majesty's ministers, who agreed that so immense a force should be kept up. By subjecting the country now to such enormous expenses, they would be placed in this situation—that should war arrive, they would be unable to make those great exertions which they had done on other occasions. It had been stated, with very great truth, that it was only by the force of her financial exertions, that this country had been able to struggle through the war, and to overcome the manifold difficulties which were opposed to her. It was therefore the duty of the

House to watch over those finances with extreme jealousy; for it must be obvious to all, that if the government went on crippling the resources of the empire as they were doing at present, England must cease to have that commanding influence as a nation, which she had so long and so justly possessed. The committee of 1817 stated, in their second report, that it was only by adhering to a rigid system of retrenchment and economy during peace, that this country would be enabled successfully to encounter a period of warfare, should circumstances render it necessary that recourse should be had to hostilities; and therefore they recommended the utmost economy in all disbursements of the public money, as essentially necessary to the substantial benefit of the country. Indeed, every part of the different reports of the committee was directed to the same object. In every sentence they pressed on the House as powerfully as they could do, the necessity of bringing down the military establishment as nearly as possible to the standard of 1792. The noble lord had drawn the attention of the House to the estimate of last year; and his gallant friend (col. Davies) had very properly observed, that it was not fair in the noble lord to confine his view to the last year's estimate, instead of going back to that period when the House peremptorily called on ministers to cut down the expenses of the country. This was done in 1821, when distress bore heavy on the country, as it did at present; though it did not weigh quite so heavy at this moment on the landed proprietors as he thought it would do in the course of a few months. At that period the noble member for Yorkshire gave the landed proprietors a little good advice, but they would not take it; and they pursued the most absurd course that any set of men ever adopted. When attempts were made at that time, to bring down those establishments to their proper scale, the country gentlemen refused to give their assistance in effecting that desirable object. They voted for the continuance of those extravagant establishments; and then, with the most extraordinary inconsistency, they turned round, and called for the reduction of those very establishments in favour of which they had previously raised their voices. The estimate which the noble lord now presented amounted exactly to within 41,000*l.* of that which he submitted to the House in 1821. The estimate for this year was 6,602,133*l.*; for 1821, it was 6,643,000*l.* But what, notwithstanding the opposition of the country gentlemen, did the House do that session? On the 27th of June they unanimously voted an address to his majesty, praying "That his majesty will be graciously pleased to direct, that every possible saving which can be made without detriment to the public interest, shall be effected in those more extended establishments which the country is obliged to maintain for the safety and defence of the United Kingdom and its dependencies; and more especially in the military expenditure, by a reduction in the numbers of the army, and by a constant and vigilant superintendance over that and all the other departments connected with the application of the ample supplies granted by this House." This was an amendment to a motion of his own, in substance the same, moved by Mr. Bankes. Ministers had, to the last moment, resisted every attempt at retrenchment, until, at the close of the session, the pressure of distress was so great, that the country gentlemen turned round and said, that something should be done. Ministers then yielded, but with a bad grace, merely to relieve themselves from the disagreeable situation in which they would have been placed, had his motion been carried, as it certainly would in spite of them, if the sense of the House had been taken on it. They got the hon. member whom he had just mentioned, to move an amendment in effect the same as the original motion, which was unanimously carried. What was the result of that unanimous address? —an immediate reduction in the army, and that, notwithstanding the noble lord, then the ministerial leader in that House, having said, a few months before, that they could not carry on the service of the country, if the wheels of government were clogged by any reduction. A reduction, however, in every department soon took place, and the following year, in the army, navy, and ordnance, there was a reduction of a million and a half. In 1821, the army amounted to 81,100 men —the expense of which was 6,643,968*l.* The next year it was 61,820 men, making a reduction, in one year, of nearly 20,000 men. This number was then sufficient for all the services of the country, and why not to-day? The expense in 1822 was 6,103,069*l.* making a difference of expenditure for the army alone, between

the two years, of more than 500,000*l.* besides the commissariat, building of barracks, and all the other incidental expenses which attend the maintenance of an army. In 1823, the army was 59,100, the estimates for which were 6,087,398*l.* Unfortunately, about this period, the price of corn advanced, affairs wore a more cheerful aspect, the poor were better employed, and ministers did not lose the opportunity of augmenting the military establishments. Year after year, since then, the numbers had been swelled, and the expense increased; in 1824, the number of men was 73,000, and in 1825, 86,438. He entreated the committee to attend to the reasons assigned for this enormous addition. The principal reason which had induced hon. gentlemen to vote for the estimates was the then condition of Ireland, and the state of some of our colonies; but, he believed, that, of the troops destined to proceed thither, not one-fifth had been actually sent out. The effect, therefore, was, that the standing force in the country was considerably enlarged, and with a militia, to the amount he had already stated. As to Ireland, it was no longer pretended that any additional troops were rendered necessary by her condition. The precise state of the present establishment, then, was as follows:—32,670 men were to remain in Great Britain, and 32,194 men in the colonies, being an increase of nearly 4,000 men. The force in Ireland was to consist of 21,900 men. If, however, in 1792, an army of 17,000 men was deemed adequate to the service of Great Britain, what possible reason could be urged for now raising the force to nearly double that amount? Besides, it ought to be recollected, that at the present moment the militia and the yeomanry corps were much larger than in 1792.

It had been stated three years ago, by the chancellor of the Exchequer, that it was necessary to keep a counterpoise to the increasing power of the people; that the influence of the Crown ought not to be decreased, because it formed a wholesome check to the influence of the people. If, however, ministers would diminish taxation; and, by relieving oppressive burthens, make all classes contented, they would find no such check necessary. A larger standing army was only required because government was resolved to do nothing to conciliate the great body of the nation. Hence it was that the people were to be controlled and overawed by a military power, daily swelled in proportion as the public grievances were aggravated. The existing enormous amount of taxation was a great and crying evil; and, in order to remedy it, it was only necessary to lessen the expense of the public establishments.—After noticing cursorily the sinking fund, as it was termed, but which added only to the general weight which the nation had to sustain, the hon. member asserted, that taxes to the extent of four or five millions might be abolished, without detriment or inconvenience. The relief thus given would be felt by high and low, rich and poor; and those only would be injured whose emoluments depended upon maintaining the existing system upon its present extravagant scale. He could contemplate nothing more grateful to the ministers of a great and free country, than the task of dispensing such important benefits. At present, the government was restrained in its operations by being, as it were, screwed up between income and expenditure, because the account was so nicely balanced by their anxiety to spend, and the desire of parliament to control. To remove taxes liberally would set ministers free, and make the people happy. He was anxious to press upon the committee the necessity for economy, because the establishments now were as large as they were in 1822, when the House had voted unanimously that they ought to be reduced; and it could not be pretended that there was any such change in the external or internal circumstances of the country, as to warrant now what had been condemned. He would not now enter into any details respecting the items, which could be discussed as they proceeded. In the speeches from the Throne, attention to economy had been pressed almost ridiculously; for he could apply to it no other epithet, when, year after year, the House was told that retrenchment would be attempted, and the only result was, that year after year the estimates were increased. It was fit that the House of Commons, disregarding mere words, should, by its actions, show that it was in earnest, and compel ministers to give relief to a patient and long-suffering people. He could not employ on this subject more forcible or more appropriate expressions than those of the finance committee of 1817, and he had therefore adopted them in the amendment which he now offered to the resolution of the noble lord. It was in these terms:—

"That in the opinion of this committee, it is expedient, in the present circumstances of the country, to make a large reduction in the amount of the expenditure for the military establishment, and to approximate, as soon and as nearly as possible, to the establishment of the year 1792, as recommended by the Finance committee of 1817, and in their second report, in the following words:—"Your committee, in making a reference to the year 1792, desire to call the notice of the House to the low establishments of the latter part of that year, which were deemed sufficient for all national purposes at that time, in the contemplation of a long continuance of peace; and, although many circumstances are materially changed by events which have subsequently taken place, so as to prevent any exact parallel from being drawn between the two cases, especially in the amount of pecuniary charge, yet they submit, that as near an approximation to that low scale of establishment and expense as may be found consistent with our more extended possessions, and with the augmented rates of various fixed disbursements, would be highly advantageous in relieving the burthens and in supporting the public credit of the country."

Lord *Palmerston* said, that if the committee concurred in the amendment, the hon. gentleman would not be at all nearer the attainment of his object, because it went only to the adoption of the recommendation of the committee of Finance of 1817, to approximate as nearly to the estimates of 1792, as might be "consistent with our more extended possessions, and the augmented rates of the various fixed disbursements." The whole question therefore was, whether there had been such an approximation, and he was prepared to contend, that the resolutions he had to propose were framed with every due regard to economy, and adapted to the existing circumstances of the country. In considering this point the fair criterion to judge by was not the mere point which had been so much relied on by the hon. member; namely, that the country was now, as in 1792, in a state of profound peace. They must, in coming to a decision, look to the present circumstances of the country; and he had contended, that, considering those circumstances, the existing military establishment was not too great. If that argument were of any force—if his reasoning were just and sound—then it followed, that ministers had acquiesced in the recommendation contained in the resolution of the hon. member. The hon. member had made the report of the committee of 1817 a very convenient instrument of debate. He had used it, on all occasions, as best suited his purpose; and he had not always treated that committee with the respect and deference which he had displayed on the present occasion. If the hon. member would take the trouble of looking at what that committee had estimated as the probable prospective expense of the military department, he would find, that the amount now called for fell considerably short of that estimate. In the report, 8,500,000*l.* was set forth as the prospective expense, including 300,000*l.* for the expense of the militia. The hon. gentleman had repeatedly stated, that, if his recommendations had been attended to, government would by this time have reduced the expenses of all the establishments full one half. Now, if the House would look at the whole of these estimates, they would see that about one half of the charges were ascribable to the effective part of the establishment; the other half to the liquidation of half-pay, pensions, and other charges, which were of a nature not in any way liable to reduction, even by the plan of the hon. gentleman. If, therefore, the hon. gentleman's design of a reduction of one-half were seriously entertained, he would cut off the whole of the efficient part of the establishment. The House would see how accurate and safe a guide, they had in the hon. gentleman. Of course, he was aware in how superior a situation the hon. member stood in addressing the House on this occasion. He had at his ready service the general topics of declamation,—the expediency of reducing the taxation of the country—the dangers of a standing army—the prevalence of a military spirit in the government—and the burthen of large and unnecessary establishments. But, he appealed to the House if government had not since the peace, by repeated reductions of taxation, shown an earnest desire to relieve the country from its burthens, and to put the establishments on a reasonable and effective footing. As to displaying too much of a military spirit—a charge which had been repeatedly urged against the government—for himself, and for those with whom he acted, he totally disclaimed it. He was sensible that there

was nothing so absurd, so ill-judged, and so inconvenient for the government, as well as being grievous to the country, as large and unnecessary military establishments kept up in time of peace. It was not only bad economy as it regarded the public treasure, but it answered no purpose of political strength and security; and, in a military sense, for the preservation and maintenance of an effective service and sound discipline, it was notoriously defective. He was no advocate for large military establishments in time of profound peace. He stood there only to advise with the House upon that establishment which he considered as the best suited to the dignity of the country, and the necessities of the empire. He would just give one instance of the effects of too rapid a reduction of our forces. In 1821, the government, in compliance with the wishes of parliament, effected a considerable reduction of the establishment. What was the consequence? There immediately occurred an urgent necessity for a great increase in the colonial service. Great embarrassments were experienced by government and, at last, after trying for three or four years, they found it necessary to come to parliament for an augmentation of the forces. Last year he had stated in his place, that this augmentation was not wanted for any purpose at home—not for coercing the population — not for oppressing Ireland, but for colonial purposes. On that ground, and on no other, he now asked for this vote. He had explained before, that the additional force was required for reliefs on foreign stations in the first place; in the second place, to form a reserve at home, from which reinforcements might be sent to distant places, without stripping the country of its ordinary portion of defence. The hon. gentleman had said, that he would be content if it could be shown that the augmentation was employed for the purposes of the colonies; but the complaint of the hon. gentleman was, that the increase of force at home was large, while it was inconsiderable in the colonies. Now, to prove to the House that government had used no unfair pretence about the employment of these troops, in 1825, of each regiment consisting of ten companies, six went out to foreign service, and four came back. The House would observe, that not only was there an augmentation, but that there was an entirely new organization effected in the course of last year. Each regiment before that time went abroad in a body. By the new organization, out of each regiment of ten companies, four were left at home to recruit, and six went on foreign stations. He had formerly explained the advantages of modelling the army in that manner. The effect of this new organization was, that scarcely any but non-effectives were left at home, as these reserve companies consisted chiefly of recruits, invalids, and men who had come home for the purpose of being discharged. Now, as the casualties abroad were filled up regularly, it followed that scarcely any but non-effectives were left at home; so that of 8,000 men of these reserved companies, it would very seldom happen, that there were less than 6,000 non-effectives on the establishment at home. The augmentation then granted by parliament had fully answered the purpose, and had been applied as the government had undertaken to apply it. He did not suppose that any gentleman would assume it as the ground of his argument, that the colonial service ought to be a perfect banishment of officers and men — that they should be compelled to pass the whole of their lives in tropical climes, or in other places equally unfavourable to their health. Yet such was the effect of the former method. In the East-Indies, there were eight regiments, which had been stationed there for nineteen years, without relief. There was one regiment at Ceylon, and another at the Mauritius, which had not been home for twenty-one years. Nor had the government been enabled yet to provide for their return, notwithstanding all their efforts to relieve them. If the number of forces were to be diminished, that relief would be impossible. The tendency of such a resolution on the part of the House would be, to consign officers and men, to a hopeless banishment, which, in other countries, was only visited as a punishment on the most culpable delinquents. The hon. gentleman was not more happy in his statement of the numerical military force of the country, than in the means by which he proposed to reduce the estimates. He stated, that we had an army of 239,000 men.—How did he make out that magnificent army? By first of all enlisting the marines into it. Next, he puts forward the disembodied militia—a species of force admirably adapted to colonial service! But would the committee believe it? 22,000 men of

that decription of force, and which the hon. gentleman contended were to be found in Ireland, had no existence, save in the vivid imagination of the hon. member for Montrose. Not one man of the Irish militia was embodied. So that, as far as they were concerned, the statement was a complete creation of the hon. member. By the same enlarged optics the hon. member had discovered an effective force of 74,000 volunteers. Now it was little less than ridiculous to calculate as part of the disposable force of this country a disembodied militia, in which not one private was enrolled, or to treat in the same manner men who were only assembled to perform eight days' permanent duty in the year.—He thought he had stated enough to show that there were sufficient reasons why the House should not accede to the proposition of the hon. member; and when that hon. member calculated the increase of the expenditure since 1792, he should have considered what was the nature of that increase, and he would then have found that it depended on charges not connected with the increase of our disposable military force. In fact, the portion of the estimates to which he now particularly alluded would not be affected by the proposed reduction, even if that reduction were now to be carried into effect. In 1792, the expense for half-pay and annuities for past service, widows' pensions, and other charges of a similar nature, was 434,000*l.* The same expense last year, was 2,803,000*l.* So that, when they examined the charges, they would find that there was an addition of 2,400,000*l.* for what the gratitude of the country had voted in the way of provision for those who had been engaged in the public service. Under all the circumstances, he considered that no case had been made out to induce the committee to accede to the hon. member's proposition.

Mr. *Robertson* adverted to the inconsistency of the hon. member for Aberdeen, in calling for low prices at one time, and attributing distress to them at another. He had generally voted with ministers upon this subject: but he really thought they did not know what they were about. They were opening our markets to a competition with foreign nations whose labourers lived at less expense, and could work cheaper than our own; and they were, at the same time, raising the standard of the currency. If they persevered, fewer commodities would be consumed, while the weight of the public burthens would be grievously augmented by the reduction. They ought, therefore, to do every thing that was possible in the way of reduction of the establishments.

Mr. *Hume* said, he would have been satisfied with the application of the new forces to the relief of foreign garrisons, but his complaint still was, that they were chiefly kept at home. If government were sincere, the increase would only have been made in available corps. But, how stood the fact? The Life-guards were 785 men in 1792; they were now 1,305. The increase of the other regiments of cavalry was from 3,037 to 7,014. Were these additional cavalry wanted for the garrisons abroad? The guards had been increased from 3,572 to 5,726. They were not wanted to increase the garrisons abroad? Why not reduce 8,000 of this the most expensive class in the service, when they might keep 16,000 infantry for less money? Each cavalry man cost 74*l.* per year, while the cost of an infantry soldier was only 31*l.*; so that if the same money must be expended, more than double the number of men, and those of the useful and available sort, might be maintained with it. The marines, which now amounted to 9,000, were spoken of by the noble lord as only applicable to other services; but in some places they had been employed in garrison. He now came to the militia, whose numbers he was supposed to have overstated. What was the fact? The militia, he asserted, consisted of 55,092 men and officers. Of these, a large proportion were said never to have been enrolled. If that was the fact, how could the noble lord ask them to pay for a force which was not in existence, but which had, nevertheless, cost them a sum of 91,000*l.* per ann. since the peace? On the subject of the half-pay, he had only to observe, that if the government would not fill up the list of half-pay with young men in order to perpetuate the item, there might be some hope of a reduction in that quarter, but not otherwise. That they did so, was evident from the fact, that the half-pay list had greatly increased since the year 1816. At that time, the sum required for half-pay amounted to 114,000*l.* It had varied in the succeeding years, and it now amounted to 123,000*l.* So that our half-pay had materially increased during eleven years of peace.

Lord *Palmerston* asserted that the 13,000

additional men granted last year had been applied to the relief of foreign garrisons. The hon. gentleman was clearly in error as to the actual number of men in the militia and volunteers. As to the charge for half-pay, there was an absolute reduction. In 1820, it was 840,000*l.* this year it would be 770,000*l.*

The Committee divided: for Mr. Hume's amendment 45. Against it 144.

List of the Minority.

Allen, J. H.	Milton, viscount
Althorp, viscount	Monck, J. B.
Bernal, R.	Newman, R. W.
Benett, J.	Ord, W.
Birch, J.	Palmer, C. F.
Blake, sir F.	Pares, T.
Brougham, H.	Pelham, J. C.
Bright, H.	Philips, G. R.
Burdett, sir F.	Powlett, hon. W.
Davies, T. H.	Robarts, A.
Denman, T.	Robarts, S.
Duncannon, viscount	Robertson, A.
Evans, W.	Robinson, sir G.
Ellice, Ed.	Russell, lord J.
Griffiths, J. W.	Smith, W.
Guise, sir W.	Tierney, rt. hon G.
Heron, sir R.	Tremayne, S. H.
Hobhouse, J. C.	Williams, J.
Honeywood, W.	Wilson, sir R.
Howard, H.	Wood, M.
Knight, Robert	Wyvill, M.
Lamb, hon. G.	
Marjoribanks, S.	TELLER,
Martin, J.	Hume, Joseph

On the resolution, "That 156,271*l.* be granted for defraying the charge of volunteer corps in Great Britain and Ireland for the year 1826,"

Mr. *Hume* objected to an additional grant for the yeomanry and volunteer establishment. Indeed, he did not see the least necessity for a country enjoying a profound peace to be burthened with a yeomanry establishment, and he should propose its being abolished altogether.

Lord *Althorp* said, he thought the volunteer corps a very useless force, and that not a single shilling, in the present state of the country, ought to be expended on them more than last year. He belonged to a yeomanry corps which drew no pay; but if they remained embodied, and were called out on permanent duty, it was necessary to pay them. He would therefore move "That 147,000*l.*, the estimate for last year, be substituted for 156,271*l.*"

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that, as he understood the hon. member for Montrose, his proposition was, that the volunteer establishment should be abolished. He begged to remind the hon. gentleman of the remarks of the finance committee of 1817, whose labours were so fortunate as to meet with the approval of the hon. gentleman. The right hon. Secretary here read an extract from the report of the finance committee of 1817, showing the favourable light in which they viewed the volunteer establishment. So far the opinion of that committee was favourable to the volunteer system, and in that opinion he cordially concurred. The question was, whether there should be any addition made to the allowance of volunteers. He felt that there should be an increased allowance; inasmuch as the present pay of the volunteer corps was inadequate to their support. In the course of his official duties, he had frequent occasions to observe the conduct of the volunteers, and he thought the whole establishment was most creditable to themselves and to the country. Yet he had never wished to see that establishment increased, and when application had been made to him from various quarters for the purpose of augmenting the yeomanry, he had uniformly resisted such a measure. He considered that the manner adopted for training and exercising those men was attended with most unnecessary expense, and it was now done away with altogether. He wished to see a permanent duty allotted to the volunteers, and was convinced that such a regulation would be most satisfactory. He wished further, that they should be inspected at stated times by competent cavalry officers, by whose report the House would be enabled to judge as to their conduct and discipline. He wished, however, not to be misunderstood. He had no desire to see the civil power placed in the hands of military men. He had never wished to call in the aid of the military, to accomplish that which the civil power would be competent to perform; but it was no reflection on the country to say that circumstances might arise when the civil authorities would be set at nought, and the intervention of the military be found necessary. He believed that the existence of that most useful body of men was of great service, and he thought that the observation used by the hon. member, that they were merely kept up to strike awe into the country, was most unfair and invidious. He supported the motion for an additional allowance, as he

believed that 5*s.* a-day was inadequate to the support of a man who had his horse as well as himself to provide for. He thought 7*s.* a day a reasonable charge.

Sir *R. Heron* considered every shilling that went to the support of volunteer cavalry thrown away. What were these troops fit for? In cases of internal disturbances they were not fit persons to quell riot and disorder. Their local connexion with the county made them parties in every disturbance, and they were therefore unfitted to interpose between conflicting parties. The disturbances at Manchester afforded a strong instance of this. It was otherwise with the regular army.

Lord *J. Russell* objected to the existence of a volunteer establishment, for he believed, in most instances, they were kept up for political purposes, and to gratify the party feelings of those by whom they were established. Constituted as volunteer corps were, they produced any thing but concord in the country; and he would much rather see the military called out in aid of the civil authorities, in case of necessity, than have resort to the interference of men who, from local feelings and connexions, were more likely to act from passion than otherwise. He therefore objected to any additional allowance, and moved, as an amendment, that 25,000*l.* be adopted in place of the sum proposed by the original resolution. He had never heard such weak reasons adduced for keeping up a large military force while the country was in the enjoyment of a profound peace.

Sir *R. Fergusson* seconded the motion of his noble friend. The yeomanry corps consisted of few masters and many servants, and were not that independent sort of yeomanry, paying their own expenses which he should like to see in the country. The regular troops were better in cases of disturbances than the yeomanry. He would like to see our cavalry plain English troops. They were the best cavalry in Europe; and he did not see any reason for dressing them out in mustachios, to the annoyance of the men themselves, and to the disgust of those who beheld them. He wished to see them plainly dressed, without any of the fopperies of foreign troops.

Mr. *Benett* conceived, that it was impossible for a yeoman to pay his expenses out of 5*s.* a day; he thought that 7*s.* was inadequate for man and horse. He had witnessed the exertions of the yeomanry in times of disturbance, and bore willing testimony to the prompt and efficient manner in which they preserved the public peace. There was nothing military about them. They were merely armed constables; and he had seen them, on several occasions, suppress very dangerous riots, without so much as presenting a pistol or drawing a sword. He wished to see them called out for three or four days in every year, for the purpose of being drilled and disciplined, and in order to ascertain their efficiency.

Col. *Johnson* denied the utility of the yeomanry cavalry, and opposed the grant altogether.

Mr. *Davenport* said, that without the yeomanry the peace of the county which he represented could not have been preserved. He believed, almost every manufacturing establishment in it would have been destroyed.

Mr. *Wynn* defended the present constitution of the yeomanry cavalry. Their utility in preserving the public peace was to be estimated, not so much by the riots they had suppressed, as by those they had prevented. Even in the conduct of the Manchester yeomanry, in 1816, he had always been of opinion, that there were many points perfectly defensible.

Lord *Althorp* approved of the yeomanry system, not as a political engine, but as a means of bringing the gentry and farmers together. But he objected to the practice of keeping them out on permanent duty.

Sir *H. Vivian* bore testimony to the good discipline and general efficiency of the yeomanry cavalry; but it was desirable that they should be inspected by cavalry officers.

Mr. *Brougham* said, that the House had voted as large a standing army for the present year of tranquillity, as it did immediately after the peace, when Europe was in the most unsettled condition. Under these circumstances, he considered the proposed vote for the yeomanry wholly unnecessary.

Mr. *Hobhouse* gave notice, that he would, on Monday, when the report should be brought up, propose the reduction of the estimate to some definite number. On referring to the army estimates for 1820, he found that those for the present year were quite as burthensome to the nation, in every respect.

Mr. *Gooch* eulogized the yeomanry, as the constitutional force of the country.

Mr. *Bernal* was of opinion, that while the military establishment was continued on its present scale, the yeomanry force was unnecessary.

Mr. *Evans* was of opinion, that if the magistracy of the country were to do their duty with proper vigilance and alacrity, there would be no occasion for the description of force under consideration.

Sir *F. Burdett* said, he wished to protect himself against being supposed to participate in the views of his hon. friends, who thought that the interference of a standing army with the civil power was preferable, in a constitutional point of view, to that of a yeomanry force. He perfectly agreed with those who considered the yeomanry as the constitutional force of the country; and notwithstanding what had been said of their inefficiency, he had observed them in the two counties with which he was best acquainted, Wiltshire and Berkshire, to be both, as to appearance and discipline, a highly respectable and useful force. In every point of view they did credit to the country. He objected, however, to the custom of taking them out on permanent duty, as it was called, because that practice had a direct tendency to destroy their constitutional character, and convert them into a body of a very different nature. The farmer could not afford to leave his home for seven or eight days, and he therefore was obliged to send a servant as his substitute. In this way a sort of armed police might be raised; but, unless the farmers themselves filled the ranks, it would be no real yeomanry force. Reference had been made to the conduct of the Manchester yeomanry, in 1816, but that corps was not, properly speaking, a true yeomanry force, but a body of armed partisans. They had, under peculiar circumstances of public excitement, been brought into action with exasperated feelings, against an unarmed multitude. But that transaction was in no degree discreditable to the genuine yeomanry. He confessed, that no part of the expense of our military establishment was, in his opinion, so little objectionable, as the grant under discussion. But he repeated, that if the object was to preserve the real character of this description of force, the permanent duty ought not to extend beyond three or four days, at the furthest. It was highly desirable, no doubt, to reduce the military charges of the country; but he was not disposed, therefore, to diminish the necessary allowances to the Yeomanry cavalry.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* stated, in explanation, that the permanent duty was not imposed upon the yeomanry as an obligation on each particular corps, to be performed at a period fixed by government. The course pursued was, to leave each corps to choose its own time, when it asked for permission to go out for a certain number of days.

Lord *Milton* was of opinion, that the yeomanry had become a very different force from what they were originally intended to be, and were applied to very different purposes.

Lord *John Russell* said, that after what had passed, he should not divide the committee.

The amendments were then negatived, and the original Resolution agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, March 6.

Gold Coin in Exchange for Notes — Petition of W. Martin.] Mr. *Hume* presented a Petition from William Martin, grocer, of Seven Oaks in Kent, complaining of the conduct of a Country Banker. The petitioner stated, that, a short time ago, he carried eighteen one pound, and two five pound notes, of the issue of the Bank in Seven Oaks, to the banking house of Beeching and Sons, and demanded payment. Instead, however, of receiving that payment in gold the banker handed him Bank of England notes; and, upon his complaining that he ought to be paid in gold, absolutely refused to do so. The petitioner then went to a justice of the peace, and requested him to summon the banker, and require him to make the payment in gold, or state the reasons for his refusal; but the magistrate declared he had no power to interfere. On the next day, the banker sent twenty-eight sovereigns to the petitioner's house, in payment of the said notes. Mr. Hume said, he had ascertained the truth of this statement, which the banker did not deny, but said it was an ill-natured proceeding on the part of the petitioner. This, however, had nothing to do with the question. The House ought to say whether his majesty's subjects were to be placed in a situation by the country bankers, in which they could not have the local notes convertible into gold when they pleased.

The petitioner stated, that four years ago a bank at Tunbridge-wells stopped, by which great distress was occasioned in the neighbourhood, and the demands on which bank had not yet been paid in full. The petitioner therefore prayed that some security might be provided by the House against the recurrence of such accidents. He found, by a return on the table, that 150 banks had stopped payment since 1816, and he therefore thought that the prayer of the petitioner was an extremely reasonable one.

Mr. *Baring* said, that if it were intended to continue the small notes of country bankers, something might be said to the petition; but as they were to be called in, he thought any measure upon the subject unnecessary.

Sir *F. Burdett* said, that in this case it was not pretended by the petitioner that he had sustained any injury, but it was brought forward merely to try the question as to the bankers right to refuse gold in payment of his own notes, when demanded. He did not see the expediency of pressing an immediate return to a gold currency. To meddle at all with the currency was not an advisable measure at that moment; and the manner in which it would affect all classes of society, had not been sufficiently considered.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, it was quite impossible for the most active legislation to meet every possible case. The petitioner appeared to him to have, in reality, nothing to complain of. On presenting his notes at the banker's he was offered Bank of England notes, which were convertible in a moment into gold, and on the following day he was sent the gold itself. Now, he did not think that any summary process required to be introduced by the hon. member for Montrose would have given Martin the power of procuring the money quicker than within twenty-four hours after his demand.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that as the man gained all he required, it was evident his only object was to make a case for presenting a petition.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Corn Laws.] Mr. *Hume* presented a Petition from the weavers of Pollockshaws, praying for an alteration of the Corn-laws. The hon. member observed, that while the wages of weavers were 5*s.* a week, and even little or no work to be had at that price, it was monstrous to continue the present system of the Corn-laws. Of all taxes the people paid, the Corn-laws were the worst. It was a bread tax, by which a limited class, the cultivators of the soil, were alone said to be benefitted. He, however, contended that they were not benefitted. Every class would equally share the advantages of the cheapness of that necessary of life.

Mr. *Benett* said, that if it was not for the Corn-laws, he would be glad to know how the nation could pay the interest of the debt, the poor-laws, the taxes, or any other of the great public burthens. If no laws protected the grower of corn, he apprehended they would find some difficulty in finding a market for their manufactures. The agricultural interest formed the bank upon which they drew for every burthen imposed upon the people. If they got rid of those laws which supported that class, they might get rid, at the same time, of the national debt, and every other tax which pressed upon the country.

Sir *R. Wilson*, in presenting a petition from the ladies shoemakers of Westminster, against the Corn laws, observed, that he liked to hear the subject discussed in that House, because these discussions were a means both of disseminating information and removing prejudice. At the same time, he considered all language of asperity or reproach towards the landlords, as highly reprehensible; for he believed the landlords of England to be as generous and benevolent a class of men as any other in the kingdom. There were some of them who considered, however, any attempt to approach the Corn-laws, as almost equal to the opening of Pandora's box, from the ills which were to be spread by that event over the country. The hon. member for Wiltshire considered any interference with the Corn-laws as likely to put an end to all payments of the national debt, or the other obligations of the country. He had no such apprehensions; but when he saw corn as high as it was during the war, and the wages of manufacturers, which were then 20*s.* or 30*s.* a week, now reduced to 4*s.* or 5*s.*, with bread at two-pence or two-pence half-penny per lb., he thought it was high time to apply some remedy to the evil under which those classes were suffering. He did not object to the landlord or his tenant having a fair remunerating price; but when he said

fair, he meant a relatively fair price, in the present fictitious state of the country. If the landlords, instead of preserving rents at the high rate they had been during the war were to lower them, and permit a free trade in corn, as well as in other produce, the whole community would be benefited. He wished to see the manufacturing classes have a rate of wages sufficient for their subsistence; and as one who voted for free trade, with the understanding that a change in the Corn-laws was to form a portion of the system, he now called upon all who had so voted to give their vote for a change in the Corn-laws.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, the petition was from the boot and shoemakers. Now, of all those who approached that House with a petition upon the subject, he considered them perhaps the least entitled to complain. It was notorious that a gentleman could not purchase a pair of boots and spurs under the price which he procured for a quarter of his best wheat. As long as the manufacturers continued to demand such prices, their profits must be as large or larger than the corn-grower's; and they could therefore afford to pay the price. They could not have corn cheap, and the other articles of life relatively dear. His hon. friend had talked of bread as being very high in price; there was no analogy between the price of bread and corn. Whether it was the miller or the baker, he knew not; but the price of corn was very different from the price of bread. He would be willing to apply the principles of free trade to corn, as well as to every other article; but in the present sophisticated state of the country, they could only approach to the principles of that trade.

Sir *M. W. Ridley* wished to know who were those lucky landlords from whose rent-rolls their rents had not been reduced. He could assure the petitioners, that if the Promissory-Note bill passed, it would not be long before the price of corn was as low as they could wish; and then they would find wages decrease also. He was sorry to see that gentlemen could not present petitions without, by a sort of side-wind, throwing out unjust and illiberal imputations upon the landlords.

Colonel *Davies* said, that if the country gentlemen would oppose the enormous estimates which were presented to the House, a reduction in the taxes would take place, which would render the burthen of the Corn-laws so much lighter, that they would not be felt; but while he saw them day after day, supporting the extravagant expenditure of ministers, he was neither surprised nor sorry to hear the Corn-laws complained of.

Mr. *N. Calvert* was desirous that the Corn-laws should be revised, but objected to any alteration which would deprive the landed proprietor of a fair remuneration.

Sir *E. Knatchbull* most positively denied the assertion, that rents had not been reduced. He also wished to state that the price of corn, instead of being 60*s.* was 58*s.* He did not think that any alteration in the Corn-laws would be beneficial or justifiable at this time. Much delusion prevailed upon this subject; which, he trusted, would be corrected by the discussions in that House.

Mr. *T. Wilson* was disposed to extend every fair protection to the agricultural interest; but he must say, that the manufacturing and mercantile interests, from the changes which had been introduced into our commercial policy, had some claims upon the agricultural interests.

Sir *F. Burdett* said, he thought that much error and much prejudice prevailed upon the subject on which a discussion had now arisen. Perhaps it would be better that such a discussion should take place when the question was brought fairly before the House, than to have it introduced in the present irregular way, on the presentation of a petition, as many hon. gentlemen representing the landed interest, whose opinions were upon this subject the most important, might feel it irksome, without some previous intimation, to deliver their sentiments. This was a natural feeling for those to entertain who were not in the habit of frequently expressing their opinions in that House. Much delusion, in his opinion, prevailed upon this subject, and he was, therefore, desirous that it should come fully and fairly before the House, with a view of dissipating that delusion. As to the particular distress of shoemakers, or of any other class of persons, it was a thing certainly to be regretted that distress existed amongst them; but that distress, whatever they might think, was quite disconnected with the present question. The distressed situation of the labouring classes was governed by principles totally distinct from those upon which the question of the Corn-laws depended. The working classes laboured

under a mistake when they raised the cry for cheap bread. It was certainly very natural for them to do so in their distressed state; but what he complained of was, that gentlemen who ought to be much better informed, should encourage the delusion under which those persons laboured, in supposing that, with cheaper bread, they would still have the same rate of wages as they now received. The manufacturers, who expressed so much compassion for the state of their workmen, in the next breath stated, that they expected to derive a benefit from a reduction of the rate of wages, in consequence of a reduction of the price of corn. The manufacturers expected that a reduction of the rate of wages would be beneficial to them in this way—that it would enable them to come into the market with the foreign manufacturers on fairer terms than at present. On that point, also, he believed that the manufacturers would find themselves totally mistaken. But what, then, became of their compassion for their unfortunate workmen? He really believed, that when the subject came to be fairly and properly discussed, delusion and misrepresentation would be found at the bottom of all the statements which were put forth respecting the operation of the Corn-laws upon the working classes. It was to be lamented, that any class of persons in this country, or in any part of the king's dominions, should be unable to maintain themselves in comfort by the exercise of their honest industry; but it was not fair to charge such a state of things upon the Corn-laws, for the purpose of enlisting the feelings of sympathy against that system. Every man in that House must wish that his poorer countrymen were well off, comfortable, and happy—that every one of them had a fowl to put in his pot, not on a Sunday alone, but every day in the week. But if that object could not be obtained, and if a distress which they all deplored prevailed, it was idle and mischievous to hope, or to attempt to remedy it, by setting one part of the community in opposition to another, and creating an animosity between the manufacturing and agricultural interests. Those interests would both flourish best when they were most united. It was impossible that the landed interest should be poor, and the other interests of the country great and flourishing. This it was an easy matter to prove; and he trusted that much light would be thrown upon the subject in the forthcoming discussions, to refute the erroneous notion which some entertained, that the adavncement of one interest was at variance with the support of another. In the mean time, he deprecated the attempt that was made, by partial and unjust representations, and by irregular discussion, to perpetuate those errors, and to foment prejudices in the public mind against the landlords. He knew the character of that particular body, of which he had himself the good fortune to be a member, and he would not hesitate to say, that throughout Europe, throughout the world, and even in that portion of the new world which we were disposed to regard with a favourable eye, on account of its liberal institutions, there was not a set of men to be found who could be compared with the landed proprietors of England, for the exercise of all the virtues—and most important ones they were—connected with their situation [cheers]. When the question came to be discussed, he should be prepared to support the propriety of a free trade in corn—not because he thought the measure would depress the landed interest—he believed it would have no such effect; if he thought that it would, he would adopt a different line of conduct, for he held it to be necessary that the landed interest, which was the foundation and support of all the other interests of the country, should, if need be, be upheld. He would support a free trade in corn, because he was friendly to the principle of free trade on all subjects of commercial policy: and, if he regretted any thing at the present time, it was that that part of his majesty's government, who advocated the principles of free trade, had not been able to carry their liberal principles to such an extent as was to be desired. He was for a free trade, not only in corn, but in every other commodity; and, in the first place, he was desirous to see a free communication established between every part of his majesty's dominions. When the time should arrive, he would endeavour to show that the landed interest were in error, in supposing that they would suffer any injury from a free trade in corn, as the commercial interest were in supposing that they could be in a flourishing condition while the landed interest was depressed. He hoped they would be prepared to give up the protecting duties,

and that when a particular trade was thrown open, they would not overwhelm ministers by complaints of the distress it occasioned them. With reference to the discussion the other night as to the silk trade, what he complained of was, that the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Board of Trade, did not carry the principle into effect. The right hon. gentleman had proved, as clear as daylight, that he could afford no more protection than a duty of 30 per cent; that by giving more, he would in fact, be giving less, because he would be letting in the smuggler, and subjecting the trade to all the inconveniencies which were before attendant upon it. A protecting duty of any kind ought to be allowed with great caution; for it had the effect of obliging the consumer to buy an inferior article, at a price beyond its real value, besides its injurious effects upon the judicious employment of capital. If the trade were worth embarking in, it ought to be open to competition, and not be fettered with a protecting duty; and if it were not, it would be better that the capital of the country should be laid out in some more profitable pursuit. He had a further objection to it. If the free principles were to be acted upon, it was expedient and wise to act upon them fully. When they changed the commercial policy of the country, they ought to have followed up the principles of that change entirely. It were better not to have entered upon the change at all, than, after having entered upon it, only to follow it up a little way. When they departed from a course which they had long followed, they ought to depart from it altogether, and enter upon their new line of policy, by acting in all things upon the principle by which it was recommended. It was for this reason that he was favourable to a free trade in corn as in every thing else; and he did not think that the landed interests had any real grounds to justify the apprehensions which they entertained, from the trade in corn following the general rule of free trade adopted towards other articles.

Ordered to lie on the table.

Army Estimates.] The House having again resolved itself into a committee of supply, Lord *Palmerston* moved, "that 13,135*l*. be granted for the charge of the Royal Military College."

Mr. *Hume* asked whether all the young men educated at the establishment obtained commissions?

Lord *Palmerston* said, that the number of students furnished with cadetships during the last two years was 113. Of these 46 were by purchase, and 67 by gift.

Mr. *Hume* objected to the appointment of new officers in the present distressed state of the country, whilst there were many meritorious officers on half-pay who would be glad to obtain employment. He also objected to the high salaries which the staff officers of the college received.

Lord *Palmerston* said, that officers, to be of service to their country, should be well educated. If they were to be instructed in that kind of knowledge which would be useful to them in their profession, it was right that the instructors should be paid for their trouble. All the officers educated at the college had distinguished themselves; a proof that the expense of the establishment had not been thrown away.

Mr. *Hume* objected to the sons of gentlemen being educated at the public expense. He wished to know how many days, during the last year, the governor of the college, whose salary was 1,500*l*. had attended at the institution?

Sir *A. Hope* said, that he was the governor of the college. He obtained leave of absence for two months, during the last year, upon urgent private business; but his attention was not withdrawn from the establishment. The situation was an arduous one; and, so far from being an object of desire, he had resigned it for the situation which he formerly held, the salary of which was only 400*l*. He now only continued in it until sir E. Paget, should arrive in this country. The salary was not too much, considering the liberal conduct which the governor was compelled to display towards foreigners visiting the college, and to the society in the neighbourhood. He had held the situation for ten years, but had not grown sixpence the richer, in consequence. The establishment had been maturely considered by government, and was thought not to be too extensive.

Colonel *Wood* said, that the example of the Americans had been referred to; but they had a military college, as well as this country.

Colonel *Davies* remarked, that the expense of the American army was

only 500,000*l.*, whilst that of ours was 6,000,000*l.* He complained of the large and expensive staff maintained to superintend the education of 216 young men.

Sir *H. Hardinge* said, that in the American college there were 268 cadets, who cost more than he was aware of.

Mr. *Hume* said, he would ask, whether 24,000*l.*, the amount of the subscriptions of the cadets, was not enough for the college? The government had no right to teach at the public expense what those boys could learn at other seminaries. If they were to be taught every thing at the college, why not teach them their letters? Here were three French masters, two German masters, three masters of history and classics, and a drawing master; he contended that these nine masters should be dispensed with, or that the pupils should pay them themselves. He would move as an amendment, to reduce the vote 3,000*l.*, making the sum voted for the whole expense of the college 10,135*l.*

Sir *Hussey Vivian* considered the estimate not beyond the amount required. Whilst he was upon his legs, he wished to say a few words upon a matter introduced to the notice of the House by an hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett) whom he was sorry he did not see in his place. He referred to a paragraph which had appeared in the newspapers respecting a transaction in the 10th Hussars. When it was first mentioned, he had stated, that he had no doubt the affair would turn out to have arisen from a desire to abstain from the infliction of corporal punishment. He thought that such subjects as these should not be brought before the House, because they tended to create prejudices towards a certain quarter, though he was quite sure the hon. baronet had no improper object in bringing this matter forward. He had stated, that the transaction had been exaggerated, and he held in his hand a report from the commanding officer of the 10th, which fully confirmed his statement. The man had behaved extremely ill, and recourse was had to the usual punishment of drill; he lay down, refused to move, and two serjeants were directed to force him along. He afterwards was confined; and subsequently expressed contrition for his offence. The officer consented to overlook it, but insisted upon his performing two days' drill. The only point of the officer's conduct upon which the commander-in-chief had felt any dissatisfaction was, his not bringing the man before a court-martial and having him punished. He had also received a communication from the mayor of Exeter, in which they declared their decided opinion, that the 10th were the best-conducted regiment that ever entered their city. He had had the immediate command of them for a considerable time, and he owed it to them to state, that he never met with officers more attentive to their duty, or more competent to the discharge of it. The office of adjutant was one of great trouble and difficulty, yet every one of the officers, including the son of the hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett) had filled it in their turn. The officer who held it at present was a son of one of the most distinguished families in the land. He was aware, that there existed among them a sort of esprit de corps, which might have been very proper in itself, but had been improperly directed on one occasion; but he was convinced, that the general prejudice against them was most undeserved.

Mr. *Monck* thought that much of the charge might be dispensed with. There was no reason why these gentlemen should be educated at the public expense. If we were to have a metallic currency and low prices, we must have low taxes.

General *Gascoyne* observed, that the hon. member for Aberdeen had recommended that persons educated at the college should pay the expense out of their own pocket, except officers' sons, who should be educated at the public expense. Now, the case was exactly so. Where the individuals were not officers' sons, they paid for their education.

Sir *J. Yorke* said, that if the charge of defraying the expenses of this college were taken from the public, it became a private seminary; and at private seminaries pupils learnt nothing. Noblemen's and gentlemen's sons came away from those schools without learning any thing but extravagance and swindling.

Mr. *Hume* replied, that his object was, not to allow the sons of officers to be educated at the public expense. He was satisfied the gallant admiral would not grudge to pay 125*l.* per annum for his son's education. He believed the college was a good school, but the public ought not to be forced to pay for the education of other persons. He thought it hard that the people of England should be taxed to educate the children of the rich.

Lord *Palmerston* thought, that great misunderstanding prevailed upon the subject of this vote. Take all the seminaries of the country together, and it would be found that such an education as was given at the military college could not be obtained elsewhere at as cheap a rate. It had been objected that the cadets should pay the expense of their own education; and so they did in part. But there were the sons of distinguished officers, who could not pay the whole expense of their education; and, would the hon. member exclude them from rising to the height of their profession? So long as we had an army, the officers of it should be well educated.

The committee divided: For the amendment 22; Against it 87.

List of the Minority.

Althorp, visc.	Palmer, C. F.
Bernal, R.	Pares, T.
Blake, sir F.	Rice, T. S.
Burdett, sir F.	Rickford, W.
Davies, col.	Robinson, sir G.
Howard, hon. H.	Russell, lord J.
Hume, J.	Sykes, D.
Knight, R.	Tomes, J.
Leycester, R.	Wharton, J.
Martin, J.	Wyvill, M.
Monck, J. B.	TELLER.
Ord, W.	Smith, S.

On the resolution, "That 35,498*l.* be granted for defraying the charge of Garrisons at home and abroad,"

Mr. *Hume* objected that, in a variety of cases, governors and lieutenant-governors were kept up whose appointments were merely nominal. Some never resided at all; and in many places the garrisons were only kept up for the purpose of placing a certain number of sinecures at the disposal of government.

Lord *Palmerston* said, that many of the posts were not sinecures, and that such as were, were rewards given to meritorious officers for services performed.

Mr. *Hume* wished to know why Fort Augustus and Fort William, two places which the military commission had recommended for reduction, were not given up? and why there was an increase in the estimate? He understood that they were still maintained at the desire of the duke of Wellington.

Lord *Palmerston* said, that if they had been demolished, the officers attached to them would have retained their pay during life; so that nothing would have been gained. The trifling increase in the estimate, arose from some addition of pay given to non-commissioned officers. The question came shortly to this—whether the Crown ought, or ought not to have it in its power to reward long services?

Mr. *Hume* was afraid that the favoured officers, and those of influence, got more of this reward than the meritorious ones. Who, for instance, was the governor of Hull, with a sinecure of more than 800*l.* a-year?

Sir *A. Hope* objected to the term sinecure, as applied to the appointments in question, which were invariably the hard-earned rewards of long service. In the course of a war, during which 500 meritorious individuals had risen to the rank of general officer, there were but forty-four of these little governments to distribute amongst them; and these were the same as had existed in the British army for upwards of a hundred years. They were, in fact, the only reward in the power of the Crown to bestow upon officers who had become distinguished, wounded, or worn out in the service of their country. The hon. member could not point out one individual who had obtained his appointment from mere favour. The individual alluded to was general Hill one of the duke of Wellington's aide-de-camps.

Lord *John Russell* said, that he had changed his opinion since last year upon this point. He thought that the Crown ought to have the power of providing for officers; and that a place was better than a pension, because there was something of honour attached to it. Still he could not understand why Fort Agustus and Fort William had not been demolished.

Sir *H. Hardinge* said, that since the Caledonian canal had been constructed, one of these forts stood at the very entrance of it; and, if it were not for it, any privateer with a couple of guns might come up to the lock gates and blow them off. As for the other fort, it was used as a barrack, and was wanted in that part of the country. Besides, he believed that the maintenance of these forts was part of the act of Union with Scotland.

Mr. *Hume* said, the forts were not built till after the Union. The canal alluded to was itself useless, and it was too much to pay 1,000*l.* for a fort to protect it. He thought the garrisons in the colonies ought to be paid for by the colonies themselves. He was sure, with

reference to Canada, that that colony would be happy to defray the whole expense of its own government, if they would only give them a good government and British laws. Why should not Gibraltar pay for its own garrison? So long as the revenues of Gibraltar went into the pocket of the king, the House ought not to grant a shilling for its support. Again with respect to the Cape of Good Hope, if his majesty's government would only give the people of that colony a good governor, and English laws, they would be ready to pay all their own expenses. But how was the fact? Lord Charles Somerset was a man whom every body detested.

Sir *A. Hope* felt himself called upon to interfere, when he heard a gallant officer spoken of in so disrespectful a manner in his absence. He really thought it altogether unfair to take this course.

Mr. *Hume* contended for his right to allude to the conduct of public officers. How else were they to be brought to justice? And how was it in this very case? Lord Charles Somerset could not be got over to this country, although they had been led to expect that he would be here to take his trial long ago.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* thought the hon. member misunderstood the grounds on which he had been called to order. It was not because the hon. member was bringing charges, but because he was using unguarded expressions. His whole argument, however, was foreign to the purpose, because not a halfpenny of the governor of the Cape's salary was paid out of the present vote.

Mr. *Hume* said, that his argument was quite to the purpose. He said, that if the Cape had another governor, it might be made to pay all its own expenses. In saying that lord Charles Somerset was detested by every body, he meant every body, at the Cape; and as far as his knowledge went it was so. [Cries of "Order."]

The *Attorney-general*.—A man under accusation!

Mr. *Hume*.—Under accusation! Why that was just what he said—under serious accusations—for which he ought to be brought to justice.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* was disposed to believe that the hon. member for Montrose had exceeded the instructions of his constituents of the colonies, and that he had pledged them more extensively than they were willing to redeem. He had undertaken to say, that the inhabitants of the Cape were willing to pay all the civil and military expenses of the colony, if lord Charles Somerset was removed from the governorship. It was to be wished that the hon. member had stated his authority for that assertion, which at present rested entirely upon his assumption. As to that noble lord's not coming home to answer the charges, it should be recollected, that he could not leave his charge till a successor was appointed. A highly honourable and intelligent officer had been sent out in that capacity, and the immediate return of lord Charles might be calculated upon. The hon. member was, without doubt, warranted in commenting upon the character of every public man in that House, and not to do so, if he thought there was reason, would be a dereliction of duty; but in God's name, let every man have a fair trial! With respect to Canada, the hon. gentleman was pleased to say, that upon certain conditions, named by him, the people there would be most happy to pay their own expenses. Now, on the part of the people of Canada, he begged leave to say that they would be happy to do no such thing. Instead of bringing forward these doctrines about our colonies in this desultory manner, on a question of estimate, why did not the hon. member bring the whole subject fairly under the consideration of the House? He would undertake to say, he would not find twenty persons in Canada, to sign a petition to pay their own expenses. The question was, whether the colonies were or were not to be preserved? If they were worth preserving, expenses must necessarily be incurred in their maintenance. As to the administration of the money, he could only say that it was disposed of in the most economical manner, through the hands of a responsible body.

Colonel *Davies* condemned the whole management of the colonies as the most infamous system of jobbing on the face of the globe. The expense of keeping every colony was greater now than it had been while they were in the hands of the power from which it had been taken. Under the Dutch the Cape of Good Hope paid all its expenses. His object in rising was, that his hon. friend should not be hunted down.

Mr. *S. Rice*, in allusion to the complaints against lord C. Somerset, took oc-

casion to eulogize general Bourke, who had been sent out to supersede him.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the hon. member might as well have eulogized the character of sir Peregrine Pickle. What had that officer's character to do with the present question? In a time like this, every shilling that could be saved ought to be saved. Why should individuals in this country be called on to pay for the garrisons of Canada or the Cape of Good Hope, any more than for the troops employed in Jamaica? If the colonies were worth being defended, surely they ought to pay for that defence. In his opinion, the 5,900*l.* charged for those garrisons ought to be deducted. He would therefore move, that the resolution be reduced by the sum of 5,900*l.*

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* defended the propriety of the vote. It was very true that the power of taxation, to meet the expense of the garrison—and every other expense with respect to the Cape of Good Hope—rested with the government. The question, then, was, whether the colony was able to support the necessary expense? There was nothing analogous between the situation of the Cape of Good Hope and that of Jamaica. The hon. member talked of introducing British laws, and even the British language, in the former place. But it was deceiving the House to say that such objects could be effected in so easy a manner. Every thing possible had been done for the amelioration of that colony.

Sir *R. Wilson* said, that when he was at the Cape, a Dutch officer, who had been governor there, informed him, that he had been always able to levy sufficient in the colony for the maintenance of the garrison, &c., without calling for a shilling from the mother country. He did not understand why that should no longer be the case.

The committee divided: For the amendment 21; Against it 116.

List of the Minority.

Bernal, R.	Newman, R. W.
Blake, sir F.	Palmer, C. F.
Bright, H.	Rickford, W.
Burdett, sir F.	Rumbold, C. E.
Davies, col.	Sykes, D.
Evans, W.	Tomes, J.
Hobhouse, J. C.	Webb, E.
Knight, R.	Wood, T.
Leycester, R.	Wyvill, M.
Marjoribanks, S.	
Martin, J.	TELLER.
Monck, J. B.	Hume, J.

On the resolution, "That 107,296*l.* be granted for defraying the charge of half-pay and reduced allowances to officers of disbanded foreign corps, of pensions to wounded foreign officers, and of allowances to the widows and children of deceased foreign officers, for the year 1826,"

Mr. *Hume* inquired, whether those foreign officers were allowed to sell their half-pay?

Lord *Palmerston* said, that they were permitted to sell their half-pay, in precisely the same way as British officers, but that commissions did not bear the same price according to the rank. The instances, however, were few in which this permission had been taken advantage of.

Mr. *Hume* said, that if old men whose incumbrance on the public would be determined by a few years, were allowed to substitute younger men in their places, he could not see where the system would stop.

Lord *Palmerston* said, the hon. member had adopted a mistaken view of this matter. The half-pay was by no means a perpetual arrangement, as he seemed to suppose; nor were the individuals who remained on the list a whit more immortal than those who sold out. The advantage of the system was this, that those foreign half-pay officers formed a class of men who could not be employed, without a special act of parliament; but, by allowing them to sell out, instead of supporting a body of officers from whom we could derive no service, we procured the assistance of British officers whose services were at once available. This arrangement did not substitute young lives for old ones. It was most advantageous to the country, and to the persons immediately concerned, by giving a scope to the preferment of meritorious officers. This was a most desirable object. Since the peace, officers were growing gray in the service, who, in consequence of this arrangement, were enabled to get forward.

On the resolution, "That 1,285,566*l.* be granted for defraying the charge of the out-pensioners of Chelsea-hospital,"

Mr. *Hume* said, there was no man more anxious than he was to provide for those individuals who had served their country in the field; but he could not conceive why this expense should go on increasing. In 1821, the sum charged was 940,000*l.*; in 1822, 966,000*l.*; in 1823, 1,224,000*l.*; in 1824, 1,229,000*l.*; in 1825, 1,240,000*l.*; and now it was 1,285,000*l.* He should

like to know what reason could be assigned for the increase.

Lord *Palmerston* said, the vote was required to requite those soldiers who had served for a given period, or who had within that period been disabled in the service of the country, and had thus become entitled to pensions. It was not for those who administered the regulation to dictate what number of men should present themselves for admission; it was only when those claims were made, that the duty of the officers of that establishment commenced, by investigating the nature of those claims. Considering the large amount of the army during the war, there must have arisen a greater number of claims from those who had been partially disabled, than could have been supposed to have been reduced in consequence of deaths. He felt confident that the House would not apply an ill-judged economy to the pittance of the soldier who had been disabled in the service of his country.

Mr. *Hume* recollected the noble lord holding forth in 1817 and 1818, that most of those on the pension list were men who must have suffered from the war, and that a great reduction might naturally be expected to take place; but if instead of 800,000*l.*, the expense was found to amount now to 1,200,000*l.*, it must be evident that there was something wrong. He had heard that much of this increase arose from some deficiency in the personal appearance of the men—from their want of whiskers, or some equally important matter, and that those who were thus deficient, had received a hint to be off, in order to make room for younger and better looking men. He suspected also that there was something wrong in regard to the officers on half-pay. After the reduction of the army in 1816, the amount of half-pay and allowances amounted to 460,000*l.* We were then told by the finance committee, that a great decrease might naturally be anticipated; but, instead of that, the amount had regularly increased till 1822, and even now was more than in 1817. In that year it had been 647,000*l.*; in 1818, 651,000*l.*; in 1819, 737,000*l.*; in 1820, 783,000*l.*; in 1821, 765,000*l.*; in 1822, 818,965*l.*; and now for 1826, it was 770,530*l.* There had, therefore, from 1816 to 1822, been a regular and large increase, after it had been supposed that the amount had reached a maximum. If, at the peace, every officer in the army had been put on half-pay, the total amount, he believed, would not have exceeded 400,000*l.* or 500,000*l.* He felt certain, that the increase boded something wrong and rotten, and that it ought to be strictly investigated.

Sir *C. Long* said, that the hon. member had not taken notice of the fact, that in 1822 the out-pensions of Kilmainham had been incorporated with those of Chelsea. He admitted, however, that the position taken by the hon. gentleman was one in which he himself had been placed. He had looked for a diminution under this head; but instead of it, he was surprised by an increase. He had also found the utmost difficulty in accounting for it. He knew that it could be accounted for, in part, by the reduction of veteran battalions, and in part by the recalling of troops from the East and West Indies. But these two modes were not enough to account for a gradual and progressive increase. He thought it wrong decidedly, and had sent persons into various parts of England to detect fraud and imposition, if they existed. None had been detected. He had sent parties into Ireland upon the same errand. But as yet he had no satisfactory returns. He could not say where the fault lay. Certainly, the government was not blameable. They could not refuse the pensions. The increase was probably owing chiefly to the service-pension list existing under Mr. Windham's system, adopted when the House and country did not seem to have the least idea of the extent to which the expense might be carried. He had opposed that service-pension plan at the time it was proposed, and he was now clearly convinced that it ought never to have been carried into effect. But that regulation had been subsequently altered, and its provisions confined to those who had enlisted under that system. The rest were under a different regulation, and not entitled to a service-pension until they had served twety-years. Under the former system, it was competent, in many instances, for persons to retire on service-pensions, whose ages only amounted to about thirty. The hon. member must therefore complain of Mr. Windham's law. But he hoped we had now reached the acme of the effects of that system.

The resolution was agreed to. On the question, that the chairman report these resolutions to the House,

Mr. *H. Gurney* complained of the hardships suffered under the commission

for army arrears. He held in his hands the case of a gentleman, whose father had been in the service of government for fifty years, and having taken the agency of two fencible regiments in 1794, had delivered in his accounts to the War-office in 1800, had received his quietus in 1807, and in 1824 his son and executor had been brought into the court of Exchequer, and there remained under process.

Lord *Palmerston* believed the hon. member could not name any case in which the person called on was not liable to pay. Still it did not follow, because an individual was called on to pay money in this manner, that any doubt was cast on his honesty; for it might happen that too great a sum was originally issued by government to the individual, and then it might, properly and fairly, remain in his hands till he was called on to repay the balance of that which he had received. On the other hand, the delay of the government in thus calling on an individual was no imputation on them; for they might not be able to make up their accounts immediately. In all these cases, in which the parties had resisted the claim of government, their resistance had been found illegal.

Ordnance Estimates.] Sir *H. Hardinge*, before he proceeded to propose any vote, begged to make a few observations relative to the Ordnance Estimates for this year. It would be seen at once that an increase had taken place in the amount of the whole sum to be voted. That increase was, however, no actual increase of the expense of the Ordnance department, but arose from the transfer of certain items from the army extraordinaries and navy estimates. From the army extraordinaries the sum of 210,260*l.*, for the repair of works and buildings, &c. had been transferred to the Ordnance estimates, and would have the effect of not only causing a diminution of expense, but of placing the item within the control of a corps that had the best means of executing the duty. There would also be an advantage in having various expenses, which were formerly scattered and separated, collected under one head; and of placing every thing connected with works and buildings in the engineer department in one estimate; so that hon. members would in future be enabled to see the increase or diminution at a glance, and to propose any curtailment which might be deemed proper. Another transfer had also taken place from the naval department, which would swell the Ordnance estimate beyond what it would otherwise have been, to the extent of 98,133*l.* The total amount of these transfers was 318,393*l.*, which made the whole estimate amount to 1,754,403*l.*, of which 1,436,110*l.* only was for the ordnance. The excess of the estimate for the present year over the last was 45,495*l.* but it was much smaller than during any of the thirty years preceding 1825. One part of this increase, amounting to 22,500*l.* arose from an addition to be made to the royal artillery regiment. It was proposed to make up each company to seventy men. Formerly there was a driving company, which was now borne upon the artillery, and, therefore, comparing the present with the last year, it would be found that there was only an increase of 350 men. This increase did not arise from any dread of foreign war, or internal discord; for if there were any dread of either, it was evident that such an increase would be productive of little advantage. It arose, in fact, from the condition of the artillery regiments, which, as they were at present composed, were found inadequate to the duty which they had to perform. With regard to the number required for the colonies, it had been found absolutely necessary to have five companies more than there were last year, as it was impossible for the service to be performed with less than forty companies, a great number of them being generally sick; at one time there were no less than 500 invalided. It might be asked why more were required to carry on the service this year than for the last four years? He should answer, that circumstances were different now from what they were three years since. The colonial troops were then relieved by veterans who were able to bear up against the climate. The troops they then sent were mostly what had composed the army of occupation in France. These men were now entitled to return, and those sent out to supply their places were mostly recruits, who would not be so well able to endure the change of climate, and the other consequences of the service. It had therefore been at first thought proper to ask that the number of men in a company should be increased from 70 to 80; but on account of the present difficulties of the

country, that design was abandoned, although, undoubtedly, such an increase would be required next year. During the war, the proportion of artillery-men to soldiers of the line was as one to nine, but now that proportion did not exceed one to fifteen. The proportion of dismissals was this—four out of five artillery men were dismissed, and the fifth was kept up; while in the line, two out of three were dismissed, and the third was kept up. The proportion of artillery men had been lowered, since the peace, beyond that of any other men in the service. The present measure was, therefore, one of absolute necessity; and he hoped it would not be received with the worse grace, because it happened to be made at a most unfortunate period. He wished to add, that the augmentation of the companies had taken place without any augmentation of officers. He would now refer to the item of cadets. The number of cadets at Woolwich was 146, in the year 1821; they now only amounted to 40; but in the estimate they were stated at 80, because it was supposed that the artillery corps could not be supplied with skilful officers, unless that number of students was kept up, and it was therefore necessary to provide the means of maintaining that number.—The extraordinaries, formed but a small item in the present estimates; and an increase of 16,919*l.* of those to be voted for Ireland, was attributable, partly to the expenses of the Irish survey, partly to the difference occasioned by the payments being made in British instead of Irish currency, and also to some expenses incurred in repairs. Perhaps he ought to take that opportunity of saying, that the Irish survey was in a state of great progress. It was going on as rapidly as such a work could be carried forward. The corps of sappers and miners were employed upon it, and by that means much labour and expense had been saved to the country. The Irish country gentlemen had called for the survey, which they expected would be productive of the greatest benefit. Maps had been drawn, allowing six inches for a mile, as the scale of measurement, in order to afford the fullest means of information on the subject. The barracks were the next item to which he wished to call the attention of the House. The sum required for the barracks in England was 165,087*l.*; in Ireland it was 135,703*l.*, the expense in Ireland being 6,898*l.* less than last year. The increase in England was caused principally by the alterations which had lately taken place in the King's Mews, and which amounted to 25,000*l.* The barracks had been removed from the front to the rear of the King's Mews, in order to make way for the new buildings intended to form the front of that place. There had been a great diminution of barrack accommodation in this country. The number of men formerly capable of being accommodated in barracks amounted to 170,000 in England, and to 80,000 in Ireland, making a total of 250,000 men. At present, barrack accommodation could only be afforded to 76,000 men in England and to 42,000 in Ireland, and this reduction had taken place since the peace. In the military store branch there was a diminution of 11,309*l.*; and he begged to observe, that the military and civil stores had been divided into two branches, in order to meet the suggestions of the hon. member for Aberdeen. He had now come to the supplementary estimates. A great number of military works had been dismantled and taken down. This was in consequence of the reports of the commissioners appointed to examine into the whole system of our military defence. The commissioners had found many useless forts, but they had also found places of defence which it was absolutely necessary to repair. They had examined into the dimensions of the buildings, the materials, &c., and when what they had pointed out as necessary had been done, there would be a great saving. There had been barracks built at Sierra Leone, which had cost 27,000*l.* He would not enter upon the question of the expediency of that measure, but should observe, that as long as it was desirable to keep that colony, so long would it be desirable to preserve the lives of the soldiers. Every soldier was worth from 100*l.* to 150*l.*, so that, looking at it merely in an economical point of view, the country would gain by the erection of these barracks. He concluded, by moving, "That 52,349*l.* be granted for defraying the salaries to the master-general, the principal officers and clerks belonging to the office of Ordnance, at the Tower and Pall Mall, for the year 1826."

Mr. *Bernal* said, that having just got through the Army Estimates, the Ordnance Estimates were now to be considered. In both of these branches of expenditure he

could find no diminution, but, on the contrary, a considerable increase. He could not conceive why the army, navy, and ordnance estimates, should amount to such enormous sums. Those statements were the precursors of the budget, the opening of which was so anxiously looked for. He could not forbear expressing a fear, that the chancellor of the Exchequer would not find sufficient sums to meet the heavy expenditure which the House was called upon to support. Night after night immense sums had been voted for various purposes. No show of retrenchment had appeared. It was painful to observe the lavish manner in which the public purse was squandered at a time when the country was suffering from the effects of a deep and heavy shock. Was the right hon. gentleman aware that the Customs must fall short? How, then, were those increased expenses to be satisfied? That was a question which he hoped and trusted the right hon. gentleman would be enabled to answer when called upon to give his promised but prolonged statement. We were told we must have 89,000 men and a large navy; but, was the right hon. gentleman prepared to say that he would be enabled to satisfy all those expenses? He sincerely hoped he would; but it could not be denied that there were gloomy reports abroad respecting the decrease in the Customs, and those reports when coupled with the general feeling of despondency caused by recent events, and the apprehension that other disasters were about to happen, could not fail to create alarm. He hoped that the predictions of the desponding might prove groundless; but he felt it his duty to call upon the right hon. gentleman to explain why the opening of the budget was postponed.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the particular circumstances which had taken place in the course of the session had hitherto precluded him, without any fault, and certainly without any desire of his own, from presenting to the consideration of the House those statements to which they might look for the means of giving effect to the measures already agreed upon, as well as to that at present under discussion. He would, however, now undertake to promise, that on that night se'nnight, he would certainly submit to the House the view of his majesty's government upon the actual state of the finances of the country; and he entertained no doubt that, making allowance for any reasonable defalcation which the revenue might have sustained from the peculiar position of commercial affairs, it would be found fully adequate to all the measures which were proposed for the sanction of the House.

Mr. *Hume* said, he had expected, after all the promises held out of the consolidation of offices, that the country would have had the benefit of reduction; instead of which, he was sorry to observe an increase of expenditure in every item. He had already shown that the department of the army was going on in a progressive ratio of expense. The same, it now appeared, was to be the case with the Ordnance, until at length the country would be destroyed by a load of taxation to support all those enormous establishments. The Artillery were now to be augmented to seventy men each company, and next year they were to be increased to eighty. The hon. member said, that thirty-five companies of Artillery could not be dispensed with, but he really believed that ten companies were quite sufficient. We were not in a state of war: the colonies needed no defence; the twenty companies required for their relief were altogether superfluous. He regretted very much to observe the disposition in his majesty's ministers to extravagance. In 1792 the whole amount of the expense for the Artillery was only 445,000*l.* There was no occasion for having two establishments, one at Pall-mall, the other at the Tower. The salary of the treasurer had been increased, without any reason, from 1,200*l.* to 1,500*l.*; and the secretary to the Master-general had also had his salary increased from 1,100*l.* to 1,400*l.* It was quite hopeless to expect that any reductions would be made; but he had done his duty in protesting against the extravagance.

Sir *H. Hardinge* defended the present scale upon which the Ordnance estimate was framed; and said, that so far from its showing an increasing expense in the particular department alluded to, there was a reduction of 67,000*l.* as compared with the estimates of 1820, and of 193,000*l.* as compared with those of 1821. He also insisted that a system of economy was apparent in the details.

Sir *Joseph Yorke* said, that with reference to the reduction in this branch of the public expenditure under Mr. Pitt's government in 1792, he must say that the

great pilot who weathered the storm, never made a greater yaw (to use a nautical phrase) than he had done on that occasion; for it afterwards exposed this country to the necessity of sending the duke of York, with a mere corporal's guard, to the continent, to protect England from insult. He would rather at once cut away the dead weight, of which he formed himself a distinguished part, than diminish in these times one single effective man of the army or navy.

Sir *Ronald Fergusson* said, that there was no branch of our force which it was so necessary to keep up as the Artillery. It was very expensive to raise such a corps, and, therefore, it ought to be kept efficient. The British Artillery was one of the best arms of the country.

Mr. *Hume* said, that his object was, to show that the Artillery had been augmented merely because the infantry had been augmented; and for this augmentation no good reason whatever had been given. If ministers would go on at this extravagant rate, and the House would allow them, he could only say, let them do it in God's name, for he could not prevent them.

Mr. *Hobhouse* regretted to find that it was intended to retain a battalion of the guards in the Mews at Charing-cross. It would be much more becoming, constitutional, and seemly to the eyes of Englishmen, if the present opportunity of local improvement on the spot, carrying on under the eyes of sir Charles Long, the Vitruvius of the present day, were taken, to get rid of this infringement of a long-established constitutional principle. It was highly improper to keep a large body of troops close to the houses of parliament, close to the king's palace, close to the courts of law. It might be said, this four or five hundred men could not overawe Westminster. But it was fitting that the military should be removed out of sight; and especially as there was an abundance of barracks in which they might be stationed. Such was the feeling of some of his constituents; and, in compliance with that feeling, he had waited on the duke of York, who received him as his royal highness received every body, but who had told him that it was determined on that the troops should be kept there. God forbid that he should object to men in a red coat. He had as much respect for soldiers as any man, in their proper places; but it was not a fit thing that the military should be obtruded upon the people in places where they had not been accustomed. It was from such small beginnings that the citizens of free countries had become accustomed to military domination. Though he knew what would be the fate of any motion of his, yet he would make one more effort to remove the military from the heart of the metropolis, where they had the chance of overawing those with whom the free counsels of the nation ought to abide. The gentlemen on the other side stated it as a merit in the government, that they had only barracks for 76,000 men. What would those who went before us have said to this? Did the hon. gentleman who stated that, know what the amount of force was which controlled the counsels of the nation, at a time when the spirit of freedom was at least as strong abroad as at present? Did he know, that with 30,000 men, in the time of the usurper, England, Scotland, and Ireland, were governed?

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that the hon. member's objection divided itself into two heads—the architectural and the constitutional objection. On the first point, he could not conceive what offence it was against good taste, that human beings should be put in a place where horses had hitherto been kept. Neither could he tell on what the constitutional objection was founded. He should be prepared to contend, when the hon. member brought the subject forward, that it was the more constitutional course to lodge the men in barracks than to quarter them on the citizens. At least in the time of Charles 1st the cry was, that "the soldiers should not sojourn with the free citizens of the country against their will." As to the usage, the hon. member should recollect, that from 1754 to 1776, it was the practice to keep a battalion of guards at the Savoy, and when the Savoy was burned in 1776, the buildings in Somerset-house were appropriated for the same number of troops, from that period to 1789. As a general proposition too, he should be prepared to show, that it was more conducive to the efficiency of the troops, to lodge them in barracks, than to quarter them on the publicans, where they necessarily mingled with characters of the worst description. What the effect of quartering on the publicans was, he would show by a single instance; at that moment there were soldiers quartered at

Chalk Farm, and yet it was required of them that they should attend their duty in the Bird-Cage Walk clean and neat in their appearance. There were others quartered in Mary-le-bone, and at Camden Town; and what advantage the country could derive from such quartering in public-houses, he thought it would be a difficult task for the hon. member to make out. But what he objected to was, not so much the inconvenience of the distance, as the ill effect of exposing soldiers in private quarters to the danger of being mixed up with the worst members of society—a danger from which they would, in a great degree, be exempted in barracks.

Colonel *Davies* thought there could be no question as to the preferableness of keeping the soldiers in barracks, instead of suffering them to live in public-houses, associating with the most dissolute of the populace.

Colonel *Johnson* agreed, that troops were much easier kept in subordination in barracks, than if quartered in public-houses; but the situation of the new barracks was what his hon. friend was opposed to. They would stand in the heart of Westminster, than which he could conceive nothing more objectionable.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that if he was in error as to his constitutional law, he erred with very respectable authority. Blackstone had written in strong terms against the practice of separating the soldiers from the people. It was said that they were thereby better subjected to military discipline. But he would rather that they should be a little worse soldiers, than be cut off from all community of feeling with the people.

General *Townsend* said, that if the House wished to have the soldiers in good order, they must be kept in barracks. In his own regiment it frequently happened, that men were quartered out for want of room; but they generally complained of being billeted among the blackguards with whom they were obliged to mix in the public-houses. The army would soon run to confusion and disorder if the barrack system were abolished.

The several resolutions were agreed to.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday, March 7.

Abolition of Slavery.] On the motion of earl Bathurst, the order of the day was read for taking into consideration the resolutions of the House of Commons, of the 15th of May, 1823, communicated to their lordships, at a conference, with a view to their lordships' concurrence therewith. The resolutions were then read, as follows:—

"That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the slave population in his majesty's colonies:

"That, through a determined and persevering, but at the same time judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the slave population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his majesty's subjects:

"That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose, at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property."

Earl *Bathurst* then rose. The noble earl began by observing, that he was happy to say it would not be necessary for him to trouble their lordships at much length, to induce them to agree to the motion with which he meant to conclude. The resolutions of the House of Commons which had just been read had been made the foundation of certain instructions for improving the situation of the slave population in the West-India colonies. Their lordships would recollect that, more than two years ago, he had had the honour of calling their lordships' attention to those instructions which, in point of fact, had been embodied in the shape of orders in council, and sent out to the colonies. In those orders in council provision was made for the execution of all those measures which his majesty's government thought necessary for carrying into effect the plan of improvement founded on the resolutions of the House of Commons. He had great satisfaction in saying, that the measures thus adopted by government had experienced no objection from any quarter in this country, but, on the contrary, had met with general approbation. In consequence of this general approbation, he had felt the more confidence in urging the measures on the

colonies. What he now proposed was, to call their lordships' attention to what had been done since the period at which he formerly addressed them on the present subject. Since that time two or three communications had taken place between his majesty's government and the colonies; but he was extremely sorry to say, that those communications had not been attended with so much success as might have been expected, and was to be desired. With the exception of some legislative enactments in Grenada, St. Vincent's, and Dominica, very little had any where been done, towards effecting the objects which his majesty's government had in view. In addition, however, to the legislative measures, of the carrying of which their lordships were previously informed, namely, the throwing the onus probandi on persons claiming slaves, and placing blacks on an equal footing with whites as to evidence in courts of law, and which some of the islands had agreed to, a law had been made to protect slaves going to market, and another to legalize bequests in favour of slaves. He was sorry, however, to say, that the legislative assembly of Jamaica had rejected the proposed law for admitting the evidence of the blacks under certain modifications. The bill for that purpose had been thrown out by a majority of 23 to 13. But that assembly, and others which had rejected the measures recommended by his majesty's government, would soon be dissolved, and others summoned. There was reason to hope that these new assemblies would evince a different spirit, and the bill for admitting the evidence of blacks, as well as other measures calculated to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, he trusted would be passed by the assembly of Jamaica. He must, in justice to that assembly, add, that an important measure had been carried through it. Their lordships were aware that provision had been made for an episcopal establishment in Jamaica. The bishop had been fully invested with every power necessary to the performance of his ecclesiastical duties, and the exercise of his spiritual authority. In addition to this, the stipends of the rectors had been increased. In addition to the other measures taken for the benefit of the slaves, several parishes had been enabled to build churches, and to repair and enlarge those already built; and he was glad to observe, that many of the owners of plantations had contributed liberally to those buildings; and it was but justice to say, that the same liberal feeling extended to other islands. The government had received a communication from the bishop of Barbadoes, in which it appeared that his lordship had visited several of the West-India islands, in each of which he had received assurances of a disposition to take effective measures for improving the condition of the slaves. From Barbadoes a report had lately been received from nine parishes out of eleven. In these parishes there were 317 plantations. Of these, five were under the religious instruction of the Moravian missionaries, and one hundred and thirty under the instruction of the clergy of the established church. At a public meeting of the planters, slave-owners, and others, in Barbadoes, the destruction of the missionary chapel had been condemned in very strong terms. This showed that the feeling of the misguided persons engaged in that transaction was not extended to the respectable part of the community in that island. His lordship next alluded to the language of some of the petitions for the abolition of slavery, and observed, that they were not at all calculated to attain the end which the petitioners seemed to have in view. In some of them it was broadly asserted, that a state of slavery was forbidden by the Gospel, as wholly incompatible with the doctrines of Christianity. Now, the circulation of such principles amongst the slave population of the colonies must prove extremely pernicious. The doctrine thus laid down he could not admit, and he thought it highly injurious that those who called for the religious instruction of the slaves, should, in their petitions, set forth, that the Christian doctrine was incompatible with a state of slavery. He believed the best foundation on which the treatment of the slave could rest, was on the observance of the principles of the Christian religion. But it would be unfair to say, that pains should be taken to connect the slave to Christianity, and at the same time to teach him that the state of slavery (no matter what the kindness and indulgence of the master might be) was inconsistent with the religion which he was solicited to embrace.—Having thus briefly called the attention of their lordships to what had been done in the colonies towards improving the condition of the slave—but though something had been done, he

regretted to say, that a great deal had been left undone—he would now state what was proposed by his majesty's government. The resolution of the House of Commons embraced two objects—the first was the improvement of the condition of the slaves; and the other, that facility for the manumission of the slaves which would gradually lead to the total extinction of slavery, without any injury to the interests of the proprietors. The modes by which it was proposed to improve the condition of the slave were, the providing increased facilities for religious instruction—giving greater security to the possession of property—the prevention of the separation of families by sale or otherwise—the admission of slave evidence in criminal cases—the giving an additional day for the cultivation of their grounds, by which they might be enabled to keep a more strict observance of the Sabbath—the abolition of the punishment of females by the whip, and the disuse of the whip as a badge of authority in the hands of drivers, or as a stimulus to labour. And for the second object; namely, the gradual extinction of slavery, it was proposed to establish a regulation, by which, when the slave possessed sufficient property, he might claim his manumission by having his value declared by appraisement, without requiring the consent of his master. Instructions containing these points had been sent to the different governors of the several West-India colonies, by whom they would be proposed for the consideration of their legislative assemblies, and the government would soon be in possession of their opinions upon them. From the earnest manner in which the subject had been recommended to their attention, he did hope that it would have a successful result. But should it prove otherwise, it would then be for their lordships to consider what course it would be expedient to adopt, to carry the measures into effect. The circumstances under which these resolutions were now proposed to their lordships were, he thought, favourable for their object. It would appear that they were not adopted in the heat of the moment, or as the effect of eloquent appeals made to their feelings, on the subject of slavery, but as the result of their lordships' most mature deliberations. The noble lord concluded by moving, that the resolutions of the House of Commons be adopted by their lordships.

Lord *Calthorpe* said, he was ready to admit the propriety, in most respects, of the language of the resolutions in question, which had unanimously passed the other House of parliament, and that he should be exceedingly happy if he could conscientiously abstain from making the slightest objection to them. Although he did not mean to offer any opposition to the proposed measures of his majesty's government which the noble earl had described, a painful sense of duty compelled him to throw out some remarks on the resolution in which their lordships were now called upon to concur. It was a subject of sincere congratulation to himself, that he could say, that if the colonial legislatures had manifested a spirit of almost unexampled and unaccountable resistance to the measures proposed for their adoption by his majesty's government, that spirit could not possibly have been excited by the tone and manner in which those measures had been recommended to them by the noble earl. The conduct of the noble earl throughout the whole business had been highly honourable to him. He could not easily forget a circumstance which occurred two years ago, when the noble earl was communicating to that House the measures which his majesty's government were at that time pursuing with respect to the West Indies. When the noble earl came to that part of his statement which related to the intention of his majesty's government to take means for communicating to the negroes of the West-India islands that best of all benefits, the advantages of religious instruction, his voice faltered with emotion. The pause in his words, as the noble earl proceeded to describe the mutually beneficial effect which would be produced on master and on slave, by assembling in acts of religious worship, before their common and omniscient God, did more to secure the cordial and hearty assent of their lordships to the noble earl's propositions, than could have been effected by the most powerful exercise of eloquence. It would be a great injustice to the noble earl if he were not to add, that the same kind and benevolent spirit characterized all the official orders which he had sent to the colonies, on the subject at present under consideration. The resistance made by the colonial legislatures to recommendations in such a spirit was certainly calculated to excite a fear that all expectations of their sincere concurrence were hopeless. But that was not the chief

object for which he had risen. He would now state what that object was. He rose for the purpose of expressing his opinion, that, considering the great importance of this subject—considering the general feeling which existed in every part of the country respecting it, and the very little effect which had been produced by the adoption of these resolutions by the other House, it was not a practical mode of attaining the proposed object, to use the cold language with which one of those resolutions commenced. He would have preferred the resolution which had been first proposed in the Commons, and superseded by those now before their lordships. In that resolution it was declared, that a state of slavery was repugnant to the British constitution, and to the spirit of the Christian religion. He would admit with the noble earl, that the sanction of slavery was not absolutely incompatible with the Christian religion; but though it was not forbidden by that religion, still he would contend, that it was opposed to the spirit and genius of that religion, and he could not conceive that any country bound by that religion, and acting on its admirable precepts, and particularly under such a happy constitution as our own, could continue long without an earnest endeavour to get rid of such a pestilence. The resolution to which he alluded went directly to that object; and though he could not dispute the abstract truth of the noble earl's proposition, still he, for one, must wish that the present resolutions had been so altered as to embrace a little more of the spirit of that which had been proposed and rejected in the other House. The intentions of those who adopted the general tenor of that resolution, were, he thought, not fairly explained by those who took a different view of the subject. He was at a loss to conceive how it could be considered, that they who declared a state of slavery to be repugnant to the British constitution and to the spirit of Christianity, must, as a matter of course, be disposed to put aside every consideration of expediency, and all reference to the interests of the colonists, and rush at once to the attainment of abolition—that, having such an opinion of slavery in the abstract, they were not willing to allow its continuance one hour after their resolution was declared. Such was not a fair interpretation of the views of those who concurred in the resolution. The meaning of that resolution, taken as a whole, and the opinions of those who supported it, might be fairly stated to be—that slavery being repugnant to the genius of the British constitution, and to the spirit of Christianity, ought to be gradually abolished, due regard being had to the interests of the masters, and to the condition of the slaves themselves. None of the abolitionists that he had heard of were disposed to rush in a fanatical manner to abolition, as a matter which could or ought to be accomplished in a moment. Taking this as the fair view which the abolitionists took of it, and considering the necessity of expressing their opinions in forcible language, he thought their lordships would be acting more for their own character, and more in accordance with the great importance of the subject, if they were to adopt a higher principle on this occasion than that involved in the cold one of expediency.—The noble earl had complained of some of the petitions presented to their lordships on this subject. He would admit, that some of the petitioners had used language, which, ignorant of metaphysical distinctions, they did not believe improper for the expression of their opinions; yet he would assert, that the principles for which they contended were fair, and that the other House of Parliament had shrunk too cautiously from their adoption. But there were petitions presented to their lordships—he alluded principally to that from Birmingham—which had been adopted after due consideration, and by men not in the habit of coming to hasty decisions on any subject. In that petition it was declared, that a state of slavery was repugnant to the genius and spirit of Christianity. The petitioners did not mean to say by that, that the legislature was to rush on blindly to the immediate abolition of slavery, but in assigning to the Christian religion a love of liberty and a hatred of oppression, and drawing from thence the conclusion that its spirit must be opposed to a state of slavery, they at the same time were not disposed to strip it of that regard to the rights of others, which as much belonged to it as did the love of liberty, or the hatred of oppression. But it was not from the manufacturing classes alone that such petitions had come. There were others of a similar nature, from a high and most respectable body—he meant the clergy of the country—who it would not be said were in the habit of deciding

hastily, and without due consideration, upon important questions. Yet, from that most respectable body petitions had come, stating that slavery was incompatible with the genius of the Christian religion; and he thought that in so doing, and in the laudable zeal which they showed in support of this important question, they consulted as much the dignity of the church as they did the sacred duties of their profession.—The noble lord then proceeded to show, that though the tenor of petitions from various classes of the clergy was as he had stated, yet they never had any intention of calling for immediate abolition, which must be as injurious to the slave himself, as it would be prejudicial to the master and to the general interests of the colonies.—The noble lord next went on to show, that neither he nor any of those who took the same view of this question, were disposed to adopt any hasty step on the subject of abolition, or on the subject of religious instruction. So far from it, he entirely approved of the instructions sent out to the several governors of our colonies, for improving the condition of the slave, by communicating to him religious instruction, and by a more general attention to his personal comforts. But it was, he thought, a lamentable mistake, if any of the colonists thought that by religious instruction, which inculcated obedience to the powers that be, the slave would become more reconciled to his state of vassalage. The improved state of his mind which would follow his religious instruction would, no doubt, impress him with kinder feelings; but, at the same time, it would lead him to a knowledge of his rights, and to a stronger sense of the cruelties to which he had been so long exposed. He stated this, for the purpose of showing, that the improvement of the condition of the slave, and his instruction in religious knowledge must, as they prepared him for a state of freedom, open the way for the termination of his bondage, and that it would be utterly hopeless to attempt to continue him in slavery, when he became possessed of a due sense of the duties of a freeman. For the approach of that period, no doubt, gradual preparation must be made; but he regretted that the tone of the resolutions before their lordships was not of that kind which would expedite such preparations on the part of the colonists; and he was sure that their very tardy progress since the resolutions had been agreed to by the Commons, was in a great degree owing to the House not having adopted more decisive language. If two years ago, when this subject had been under the consideration of parliament, the abolitionists had anticipated, that the colonial assemblies would have resisted the adoption of the measures proposed for their consideration by his majesty's government, and that little hopes could be placed on their faithful co-operation in effecting the great object in view, would not such an anticipation have been denounced, as an additional proof of the desire in certain quarters to calumniate the colonies, and to deprive them of all merit in the discharge of the duties which belonged to their situation? This course, however, had not been taken by the abolitionists. They had allowed more than the fair time to elapse, for the purpose of enabling the government to try the effect of their own reformatory measures; and the result was, on all hands, now admitted to be most unpromising. He lamented that result; and he the more lamented in consequence of it that the House of Commons had not adopted the original resolution, which two years ago was submitted for their consideration, rather than those in the amended form, which were now before their lordships. He entertained this opinion, because he wished to see slavery abolished, it being a system not only inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, but with the spirit of the British constitution; and he thought they were rather diminishing than promoting the chances of ultimate success, by substituting a lower expression of indignation at the existing state of things in the colonies, than such a system, in his opinion, imperatively called for. Of the two evils—the resorting at once to a compulsory plan, or the dependence upon this inadequate and ineffectual recommendation—he would decidedly prefer the former. But the true course would have been the direct adoption of the tone originally recommended to the other House of Parliament, and which he believed to be, not only the best calculated to produce a satisfactory issue in the colonies, but also that most consonant with the general feelings of the people of this country, which were not adequately represented in the resolutions now recommended for their lordships adoption. He objected most decidedly

to recognize expediency as the highest principle which they were to call into action on such a subject as this, involving as it did the honour and character of the country.

Lord *Ellenborough* thought that the House was placed in rather an extraordinary situation by having had now for the first time submitted to them resolutions passed elsewhere nearly three years ago, and which they had had the opportunity, in the intervening time, of knowing were proved to be useless and inadequate for the accomplishment of their intended object. The true question before them was, ought they to adopt resolutions thus proved to have been ineffectual or to adopt others more likely to promote a salutary result? He agreed that the colonial system ought to be greatly ameliorated; he agreed that the odious system of slavery ought to be abolished; but his doubts were great, that either purpose would be attained by the line of conduct now proposed. The true question then was, in what manner could they most easily, surely, and rapidly diminish the sum of human misery which must exist so long as slavery was tolerated? If these resolutions were alone to be adopted, accompanied with a vague hint, that if they failed in their intended effect, the legislature would proceed to ulterior measures, without avowing what the nature of such measures would be, he not only doubted that the anticipations of the government would be realised, but inclined to the opinion, that such a course, instead of diminishing, would tend to aggravate the existing evil. He confessed, that as the subject was now placed before him, he could not see his way through the difficulties which on all sides encompassed it. The noble earl had said, that if the present step were not effectual, the government would resort to other means. What were those means? What objection could there be to supply a description of them? He desired to know what their nature would be, before he was implicated one step in such a system of legislative interference. The noble earl was obliged to admit that the colonial assemblies had disappointed the expectations of his majesty's government; but he nevertheless went on to state, that they had shown a disposition to amend their practice, that they had made a large provision for the clergy of the established church, that they had taken steps for the education of slave children, and that therefore there was some prospect of their promoting the remedial measures of the government, and departing from a contumacious course. Now, he could not give the colonial assemblies that degree of credit for such acts, because the better education of their slaves, by making them more enlightened christians, tended rather to ensure their most patient submission to the condition of slavery, than to encourage insubordination and the throwing off their yoke. It was therefore good policy of the planters to concur in a measure which was calculated just as much to secure the continuance of slavery, as to effect any thing else; while at the same time it necessarily went some way to conciliate prejudices at home, which would otherwise be put in action against them, in stimulating a perseverance in harsher measures. He, however, could foresee no beneficial result from adopting the course now proposed, with the experience before them of its total inadequacy. Let them, by putting a parallel case, for one moment consider the argument, and they must be at once struck with its futility. Suppose that the noble earl opposite and his right hon. friend were walking in the metropolis, and had their attention arrested by seeing a man ill-treating his horse in a barbarous manner—supposing the noble earl's right hon. friend to have said to him—"Two or three years ago I saw that very fellow committing the same outrage, and on that occasion I forewarned him, that if he persevered in the same course, I should take such measures as must secure the better treatment of the animal. Do you now go up to him, and say, that if he continues to practise such brutality, I will certainly fulfil my intentions." Would not the noble earl say, "No, go up to him yourself. I could understand your asking me to knock the fellow down for his incorrigible propensities; but would he not laugh at me, were I only prepared to repeat threats which he had already so entirely disregarded?" He was sure that such would be the language which the noble earl would use on the occasion he had supposed, though he wished their lordships to act differently in a parallel case. In fact, their common experience ought to tell them, that nothing was more calculated to excite contempt than the use of threats, without evincing the power and determination of enforcing them. As to the idea that the local assemblies were

likely of themselves to take measures for the abolition of slavery, he thought it quite idle to dwell upon it, and equally so to infer from what they had done in providing for the clergy, and for education, that they seriously contemplated to promote the main object which the government at home had in view. They might just as well suppose, that were parliament to pass a resolution recommending the general education of the Roman Catholic population of this kingdom as a preparatory step, by their progressive improvement, to qualify them for their complete emancipation, and that it was left to the bench of bishops of the established church, to bring in a bill for effectuating such an object—they might just as well expect the practical attainment of the one thing as the other, by depending upon such executive means for its fulfilment.—In looking at the state of the colonies, they must always bear in mind, that there were two classes of West-India proprietors, one residing in this country, and governed by different feelings from the other, which resided on the spot. One class was exposed to the operation of local influence and opinion of a very different character from that by which the other was affected; and what, in fact, was fit to be directed against the one, would not apply to the other. There were many difficulties in the way of the adjustment of this system, which required that the government should, at the outset, proclaim intelligibly to all, what their real determination was. Suppose, and he thought it probable, that several of the colonial legislatures should resist the proposed course, what then was to be done? They might, he was aware, alter the duties upon sugar, so as to bear upon the colonial interests. Now, to that course he would most decidedly object; for it must inflict great injustice upon some of the islands, which were ready to go a certain way with the mother country, and ought not therefore to be put on a footing with those which were wholly refractory. Suppose another course—namely, that parliament were determined to legislate for the colonies quoad hoc—that again, they could not do, for if they once interposed their strong arm between the colonial authorities and the colonial population, there would be an end to the influence of the former; and then, what plan could they devise for the future government of those islands—what means could they provide for the due execution of their enactments? It was perfectly impossible to work any good system in those colonies, without in the first instance establishing some system for the better administration of justice for the slaves, independent of the control of the masters. At all events, he would not commit himself in the present proposition, without, as he had before said, seeing his way through the future intentions of the government. He regretted, under such circumstances, that if unanimity were desirable, he could not contribute to it, as the case now stood. He could not help remarking before he sat down, that there was at least one right rev. prelate opposite who could not vote for these resolutions, because, when presenting the petition of the county of Stafford, he had declared his concurrence in the view of the petitioners; which view was, that it was hopeless to expect any thing from the colonial assemblies, and that therefore parliament were bound to act decisively for the suppression of slavery.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that if the noble lord's speech meant any thing, it would go the length of recommending that parliament should do nothing at all in this momentous question. And was this a decision in which they could for a moment acquiesce? If all (as he believed was the case) were prepared to agree in the abstract, that slavery ought to be abolished, if all were agreed that immediate steps should be taken to ameliorate the condition of the slave, and qualify him for eventual enfranchisement, then how was it that any noble lord could consistently call upon them to take no step in the accomplishment of their professed object? If the noble lord asked him, why had these resolutions been so long in their passage from one House of Parliament to the other—he had little in the way of explanation to offer, and would fairly admit that he had no satisfactory reason to assign why such a delay should have arisen; but he would nevertheless add, that if their present appearance before their lordships was calculated to show that government were serious and determined in the course which these resolutions implied, and would thereby give another chance of success to the experiment, he, for one, was not sorry that such an opportunity had been afforded of putting on record the determination of parliament and the government. The question was not, however, why these resolutions had

been delayed, but what ought to be done with them, now that they were formally brought under their lordships' consideration? It would be in vain for him to deny that the question was surrounded by immense difficulties. They had, however, on all sides admitted, that it was desirable that the condition of the slave population should be ameliorated, and that slavery itself should be abolished, as soon as was consistent with the respective interests of all who were concerned in that condition. If that were so, their only consideration was, as to the course to be taken; for something was clearly to be done, or they must be prepared to abandon their declared opinions. It was generally admitted, that the first step ought to be, to disseminate a religious education among the colonial slave population, to get rid of their badges of thraldom, such as the whip, the Sunday-work, and those other degradations which mark the inferiority of the man. They must also establish a better system of justice for the slave trials; and something must be done to regulate their valuation on the plan of the order in council, or some other mode. But the noble lord called for all these details at once, and asked, what will you do, should the colonies prove refractory? To this he would reply, that that had better remain to be determined until necessity called for its declaration. The colonies were directly under the authority of this government, though it was true some of them possessed independent legislatures for local purposes. Under these circumstances, he had no difficulty, as a question of policy, in saying, that if he looked with absolute despondency, instead of comparative confidence, at the prospect before him respecting these colonies, he should hold it to be the wisest course for parliament to try the effect of leaving to the colonies the adoption of the practical measures necessary for executing the main object, because by the colonies could it be more effectually accomplished. One great object undoubtedly would be, to teach the slave to look up to the colonial governments, as well as to the parent authority, for their ultimate enfranchisement, for without the aid of the former, the latter object would be rendered ineffectual. The colonies ought to be allowed the grace of preparing these arrangements, and the opportunity of preparing them in their own manner. When the progress of this great question was considered, they must not be surprised that those whose interests were to be acted upon through the medium of passion, and who were exposed to the influence of prejudice and the inveteracy of particular habits, were not likely to travel quite so fast as others who were removed from exposure to such associations, and were therefore better able to proceed with a cool and steady judgment. That they were bound to call upon the colonial assemblies to do what was right, he readily admitted; but allowances should, at the same time, be made for the common infirmities of human nature, and a reasonable time ought to be allowed for the growth of reason, when heated feelings had unfortunately become excited. At all events, he would say, that whether the result of the resolutions should realize or disappoint their expectations, wisdom and good policy alike pointed out their present adoption. In the event of their failure, it would be for parliament to determine upon the course which they ought eventually to pursue, and he did not think it prudent to say more on that point at present. If he was anxious for the success of this great measure, he was necessarily averse from using any language which might be productive of injury to his object. That parliament when called upon would do its duty, he could not hesitate for a moment to think—that it would assert its paramount authority when necessary, was, he thought, equally clear; but this was not the moment for precipitating so grave and momentous a consideration. The noble earl concluded by calling the attention of the House to the real import of the resolutions before them, which, he repeated, must, under any view of the question, be entitled to their general approbation.

The Duke of *Gloucester* said, he felt it incumbent on him to say a few words on the present occasion. He was ready to agree with those who regretted that these resolutions had not been sooner submitted to their lordships. He was ready also to agree with those who thought it would have been better if they had been expressed in stronger terms; but still as they were here, and must be taken in their present form, he was ready to give them his cordial support. He confessed also, that he did not think they were called upon to state by anticipation what course they should determine to pursue in the event of their resolutions being disregarded. But he thought that, waiving for the present this ulterior consideration, the more

prudent course would be, to send forth these resolutions with the full sanction of their unanimity. The delay, at all events, in bringing to the test the sincerity of the colonies, could not be prolonged beyond another year; and if the consummation to which they now steadily looked forward should not then be realized, the time would undoubtedly have arrived when his majesty's government would be imperatively called upon to enforce the paramount authority of parliament, and to carry into execution the proposed measures. He placed entire confidence in ministers in this business, and relied upon their unequivocally urging the adoption of these resolutions upon the colonial authorities, who would not do their duty to themselves, their country, or their God, if they declined to fulfil the beneficent wishes of the legislature. He regretted that any further interposition of parliament was called for to quicken the action of the colonial authorities; but he hoped the appeal was now finally made, and that no further steps would be necessary to achieve the great object which they had all in view, and which must be in the end accomplished.

The *Lord Chancellor* said:—My lords, if I understand rightly the course which we are called upon this evening to pursue, it is to give additional effect to resolutions transmitted from the lower House of Parliament. But it has been objected by one noble lord (Calthorpe) that in the first place these resolutions state no stronger ground for the measures proposed than that of expediency, and that expediency is no sufficient ground. Another noble lord (Ellenborough) contends, in the second place, that the effect of these resolutions, if your lordships should even agree to them, would amount to nothing at all. A further objection has been made as to the late period at which they are brought up hither. Now, with regard to the communicating to your lordships these resolutions at so late a period, after their being passed elsewhere, I will take the liberty of saying, that I cannot help thinking it would be an infinitely better plan to go upon generally, that when either House of parliament adopts resolutions or measures of an important character, affecting great political or private rights, it should forthwith communicate such measures or resolutions to the other House of Parliament; and I shall say nothing more on that subject. The resolutions in question are here, at last, that is certain. But if these resolutions contained any term stronger than that it was "expedient" to adopt such measures as it adverts to, I, for one, my lords, should feel great difficulty in giving my assent to them. And so much for what has been urged as to the inadequacy of the term "expediency." A great deal has been most unnecessarily said with respect to a state of slavery being contrary to the genius of the British constitution, and contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion. Now, in the first place, with respect to a state of slavery being contrary to the genius of the British constitution, I must say, my lords, that when I find this system of slave-trading was fostered, encouraged, and almost instituted by the British constitution, and I might add, under the auspices too of so great a constitutional authority as my lord Somers, I should hesitate a long while before I ventured to say that slavery was contrary to the genius of the British constitution.

With respect to a state of slavery being contrary to the genius of the Christian religion (whatever may be my own opinions about slavery in the West Indies), when I recollect that a state of slavery had for centuries existed; that the legislature of this country had encouraged it, not only by the countenance afforded to it by the ablest laymen who had figured in the history of the country, but also by a bench of bishops, as learned, pious, and respectable, as that which their lordships now saw before them, who must have known what was, and what was not, contrary to the genius of Christianity; I own I cannot easily bring myself to say that a system which has heretofore received such a sanction, is so clearly contrary to the genius of Christianity, as some noble lords seem to think it is. I cannot help thinking that we are bound, my lords, in all these cases to look at the opinions of those who have gone before us.

I cannot help saying, that while I feel most anxious, in common with your lordships, for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in the West Indies, and for the entire abolition of slavery, whenever that abolition can be accomplished, or (in the very language of these resolutions) "at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private

property;" yet, my lords, my fixed opinion is, that these great and desirable objects have been more retarded by the intemperate zeal of those who have been the advocates of such measures, than they had, or could be, by any direct opposition on the part of those who have opposed them.

If your lordships will be so good as to look back to what has been said and done by the highest authorities in this country, upon the subject of slavery and slave-trading, I think you will agree with me in saying, Let us now (however altered may be the universal feeling of the nation in these respects) hold the equilibrium fairly, and deal justly between the parties who dealt in slaves, and those who have, during so long a period, encouraged this state of things in our West-India colonies.

I have heard of books with which this country has been lately inundated; amongst them, one entitled "England enslaved by her own Slave Colonies." Why, my lords, you might rather say that her colonies were enslaved by England; for you will find that some of those colonies which had independent legislatures, on more than one occasion, proposed to limit the number of slaves to be brought into them by ships of this country, and that this country herself would not allow of any such limitation. Why, then, my lords, it is both absurd and unjust to lay the whole blame of the existence of slavery on the West-India planters, as if they alone had been responsible for the existence of slavery.

All that is now asked is, that slavery should be extinguished "at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property." Now, my lords, this would be only justice, even supposing that the transactions to which I am alluding, as having been so highly encouraged at a former period in this country, had happened only ten years since; even supposing that the same high authorities had not encouraged, by every possible means, individuals to embark their property in buying slaves, instead of having done so for centuries; for, from the time of Elizabeth, in fact, down to the period of the interference of parliament for the abolition of slavery, this country was, as a country, as much engaged in carrying on the slave trade, as any individual in the colonies, or any country in existence could be said to be. It was carried on to such an extent, that whilst the Crown had an interest in it, it would not allow the planters to import any other slaves but those which were imported by virtue of its own treaties; and these it compelled the planters to take, in every case insisting upon their accepting those only which had been the subjects of the British trade. For God's sake let the system be abolished! I entirely agree, that slavery should be abolished as soon as it can be safely and practically effected.

I certainly think, that in effecting the abolition of slavery, care must be taken that persons who have embarked their property under the sanction of law should not sustain any injury. In the mean time, where is the man who can hesitate to ameliorate the condition of those unhappy persons whom their policy has consigned to such a doom? I repeat, that I most heartily concur in these resolutions, which go upon the ground of expediency, and which is the only principle upon which your lordships can act safely. I would advocate any measure which would go to ameliorate the condition of the slave population.

The noble lord (Calthorpe) has objected to the term "expediency," and declared his readiness to go much further. To be consistent in such a determination, he ought to be prepared to call on this House to rescind all their resolutions for the last twenty years; for in every one of their resolutions the same term has been used. I see no necessity for departing now from the same course, as I cannot anticipate the resistance of the colonies to measures, having for their object the amelioration of their slaves. As little can I anticipate any permanent opposition to the final adjustment of the question, when it can be effected with benefit to the slaves themselves, with safety to the rights of their masters' property, and with advantage to the general prosperity of the colonies. If the colonial legislatures shall accede to the suggestions now proposed, there would not exist a necessity for further interference; but, on the contrary, should any obstacle or impediment be thrown in the way, then it would be for the wisdom of a British parliament to consider the course to be adopted for the benefit of the slaves, consistent with the security of the colonies, and the interests of those individuals

who had embarked their property on the recommendation and under the sanction of the British legislature. I conclude, by repeating my hearty concurrence with the motion.

Lord *Redesdale* said, he gave his cordial assent to the resolutions, being firmly convinced of their justice. If any thing was calculated to defeat the measure, it would be the violence which was manifested in many of the petitions which had been laid upon their lordships' table. In the island of Trinidad, the colonial government had taken upon itself to make some enactments on the subject, and the system was working extremely well there. Of the mischievous effects of a sudden emancipation from slavery, the island of St. Domingo afforded a fatal example; he was, therefore, in favour of a gradual abolition of the system. It was well known, from history, that slavery formerly existed in this country, but the number of slaves was comparatively few. In the reign of Richard, the whole number was 180,000; but what proportion did that bear to the whole population? What proportion also did the slaves in the Roman establishment bear to the population? It might be asked, why was Jamaica more backward than any of the other colonies, in conforming to the already expressed wishes of the British legislature? Probably because she had the example of St. Domingo before her, and dreaded a repetition of the horrible scene of massacre and bloodshed which succeeded the simultaneous emancipation of the slaves on that island. Should we not, then, allow for the feelings of the white inhabitants of this particular colony? and, however we might wish that they would forget the past, was it not excusable in them with such an example to refer to, to look on their sable neighbours with distrust and alarm? With respect to the measures proposed, if they were proceeded in with calmness and temperance, there was little doubt of their ultimate success. There could not be a second opinion as to the improvement which the adoption of these resolutions would introduce into the colonies. Both masters and slaves would feel their benefit, and the former would find a sensible difference in having slaves by wages, instead of holding in bondage a feeble and degraded race of men, whose obedience could only be purchased by the terrors of the lash. If the slaves were allowed to purchase their own freedom, their industry would receive a stimulus which would operate to the advantage of the master, as well as to the benefit of the slave. The resolutions ought to pass. The colonists should be made aware of the feeling of the mother country on the subject of the amelioration of slavery. They should be taught to respect that feeling, and be prepared to second it. The state of slavery should be improved; but nothing should be rashly attempted. A gradual amelioration should be adopted, in order to render improvement permanent and effectual; but if measures were hastily adopted, the contrary effects would certainly follow. Having stated his sentiments so far, he would conclude by giving his hearty concurrence to the proposed resolutions.

Lord *Dudley and Ward* said, that in rising to deliver his sentiments on the question of West-India slavery, he felt that the subject was one from which he could willingly have abstained altogether, and which few could approach with any thing like satisfaction. He well knew, and it had been a matter of boast among the abolitionists, that, for some time past, and especially of late, public attention had been earnestly drawn to the state of the negroes in the West Indies. From every corner of the kingdom, from every city, corporation, town, and village, parliament had received the almost unanimous expression of disgust, not only against the hateful means by which men were reduced to that condition, but against slavery itself. Such an expression of strong feeling was at all times entitled to respect, independent of the merits of the case; and there could not be a shadow of doubt that this increase of interest among so large a portion of our fellow-subjects, was to be ascribed to the increase of knowledge, humanity, and religion. So far there was good reason to rejoice; but having admitted it, he hoped he might add, without offence, certainly without the desire of offending, that the fervent zeal lately manifested was in part to be attributed to other and far different causes. The present was a period of great public tranquillity, although it had been subjected to a temporary interruption—he hoped he might also say of great national prosperity —it was also a period of great intellectual activity and enterprise; and while the means of employment were below their usual average, the desire of obtaining it was more than ordinary: in other words,

there was a great surplus of talent and energy in the country; and in such a state it was natural that such a subject should excite a strong feeling of interest.

It was natural that a subject which afforded splendid topics of declamation to every class of speakers, from those illustrious statesmen that had espoused this cause down to the itinerant philanthropist, who, having invested part of his property in the trade of the East Indies, went about lecturing at fairs and on market-days, on the horrors and enormities of the West—it was natural, he would repeat, that such a topic should occupy, not more interest than it deserved, but more than it would have received at any other period. At these anti-slavery meetings, the result of which was before parliament in so many petitions, the view that was taken of the subject by all the parties present, men, women, and children, was pretty nearly the same.

It was not surprising that in this struggle for the prize of vituperative eloquence, to be awarded by pious men and sympathizing ladies, misrepresentations should have gone abroad, and that the state of the negroes in the West Indies should have been exhibited in a light more odious than it appeared to less partial observers. He did not pretend to justify what he knew to be wrong; but he would venture to say, that the ordeal through which the West-India system had been made to pass, was somewhat too severe, even for the trial of things indisputably less defective. He did not wish to insult those institutions which had laid the foundation of civil society, by comparing them with slavery; but any man would see, that if the stores of private anecdote, and the records of public justice, were ransacked for instances of the cruel, nay, the merciless exercise of conjugal or parental authority, even the people of this purely moral and severely religious country might be made to appear in no very enviable condition. If these instances were afterwards chronicled and blazoned by the historians and philanthropists of other nations, a strongly unjust picture would be exhibited to the eyes of posterity; such a picture as he remembered a French general (Pillet) had drawn, when, after spending six months in a prison-ship, he had made extracts from the crim. con. trials, and the Newgate Calendar, and then exposed the whole to the view of the natives of his own country, as a faithful representation of the virtue of the women, and of the honesty of the men, of Great Britain. He did not mean that in the case of the West Indies the exaggeration had been equally gross; but, as a proprietor, it afforded him great consolation to reflect that too much stress had been frequently laid upon cases of individual oppression.

Whatever might be the defects of the West-India system, it did not exhibit that uniform picture of relentless cruelty on the one side, and of despairing misery on the other. But the good people of England had been taught to contrast the situation of a labourer in the West Indies with that of a labourer in England. Such a comparison was quite unfair; and there was far less difference between the condition of the negro and the labourer, than between the condition of the slave in the West Indies and the slave under his legitimate master and owner, the king of Congo, or Ashantee, by whom he had been originally kidnapped and sold. The comparison ought not to be instituted between a bad condition and a good condition, but between two bad conditions, in order to ascertain which was the worse. In religion, it might be said that we had been guilty of a most grievous omission, in not taking earlier and more effectual steps to impart to these unfortunate beings the blessings of Christianity. It was to be recollected, however, that if they had never been brought from home, they would have been at least in equal darkness—slaves in body to their savage and tyrannical masters, and slaves in mind to a revolting superstition. It ought not to be forgotten, besides, that what might be considered the natural inclination of the public mind had received a strong impulse from the exertions of a numerous and respectable sect, who had engaged in this cause the most powerful of all human motives. In their view of the case, slavery was not merely a defect in society—not only a grievance that ought to be redressed—but it was actually contrary to Christianity. He was not disposed now to discuss a theological dogma, which had received the sanction of the common council of the city of London, but he must avail himself of this opportunity of protesting, with all respect, against this attempt to force religion into the service in merely civil matters. He agreed entirely with what had been so well said by the noble earl opposite (lord Bathurst)

—nothing was prescribed. Religion, indeed, generally enforced humanity and justice, but it was wholly silent as to the degree of power one man was to possess over another. This was not only an erroneous, but a dangerous application of the doctrines of Christianity; and twenty different interpretations might be put upon the same words, to suit twenty different purposes. Scarcely a century had passed, since divines, the professors and oracles of Christianity, had ceased to assert that kings reigned jure divino; in other words, that it was agreeable to the doctrines of Christianity that all men should be slaves. The doctrine of the divine right of kings, and the doctrine of slavery, were in fact the same; yet it was now urged as strenuously by divines also, that it was contrary to Christianity that any men should be slaves. This alone was sufficient to show how scripture could be applied for any purpose; and there was nothing in the resolution he approved more strongly than that which had been left out of it—the assertion, that slavery was contrary to Christianity; which was nothing but the perversion of religion to civil purposes. Where then vanity, and the eager thirst for reputation, were united with the stronger motives of religion and humanity, and so closely united and blended as to be scarcely distinguishable by those who acted under their influence, great allowances ought to be made for exaggerated statements, arising from heated feelings. But after every possible allowance, he was willing to admit there still remained a great deal of positive evil, that could neither be denied nor palliated.

He trusted he should not be considered as influenced by too great a partiality for the body to which he belonged, if he said that, in his opinion, the system of the West Indies ought never to have existed at all; it was morally, politically, and economically wrong. The problem, then, which parliament had to solve, was, how it could undo what had been unwisely and unjustly done by our forefathers, without fresh error and still greater injustice? He did not desire it to be thought that he concurred in any view of policy which treated the West-India system as permanent; it must be changed—it ought to be changed; and the care was not what the change ought to be, but how it was to be effected. Were the public feeling right or wrong, it was too powerful and too united to be disregarded; and the continuance of unmitigated slavery was impossible. Monopoly was unpopular, slavery detestable, and the united odium of both was more than the colonies could bear. It was unfortunate that this truth had not been more clearly perceived by the colonists, who, by an obstinate and ungracious resistance, might substitute a dangerous crisis for a gradual change, and lose the benefit of that protection they would otherwise obtain from the justice of the mother country. Although he did not mean to justify the conduct of the colonists, it might in some measure be accounted for and explained.

It was within the memory of not very old men, that formerly another battle had been fought: the question was then, not whether slavery should exist, but whether the slave trade should continue. He had voted in the majority against it; and within thirty years, noble lords and illustrious peers who might one day not improbably sit under that canopy, on whose heads the crown of England might devolve, had stood up in their places and vindicated that traffic. He did not blame them for doing what they thought right: he neither blamed nor commended them; he only stated a fact, adding an observation, that, under all the circumstances, it was a little hard upon the colonists not to receive any indulgence for their impetuosity. They were, in truth, now in the situation which the illustrious personages to whom he had alluded had occupied thirty years ago. No man, however eager in the cause, however heated by the struggle, would assert that slavery was not a less evil than the slave trade, by which the wretches were torn from their native land, and exposed to all the horrors of the middle passage. The colonists had now arrived at the conviction that the slave trade ought not to exist, and this country ought not to complain, or to think thirty years too long for a moral position to find its way across the wide Atlantic. He regretted, but was not surprised, that the voyage had been so long. The planters had been brought up in the midst of prejudices; they had been so surrounded all their lives by slavery, that they hardly thought human society could go on without it: they looked upon it in the same light as the relations of master and servant were viewed in this country; and they looked upon the abolition of slavery as just as great an absurdity as we should

consider the abolition of servitude. The anxiety for improving the condition of the negroes had only of late become so intense in England, and the planters had coupled with it the late grievous oppression of West-India property, and the heavy fall in the price of the staple commodity of the islands; both of which had ruined so many families, solely dependent upon their possessions there. Was it to be wondered, then, that they were not in the best possible humour? that they were not inclined to receive very favourably any propositions which seemed calculated to reduce still lower their already fallen fortunes?

The abolitionists, in the warmth of their zeal, had drawn a most unflattering likeness of the whites of the West Indies. It was true that the parties had not been brought into contact — that they had treated only with the British government, in returning their ill-judged answers to the orders in council. But the planters fancied that they saw their ancient enemy prompting the ministers from behind, and that though the voice they heard was that of the noble earl, the hand they saw was that of their persevering antagonist. Still the conduct of the whites had not been that of men desirous of exercising unnecessary power, or of inflicting unpunishable cruelty; they acted like men who, having lost part of their property, trembled for the remainder, and smarted under the misrepresentations of calumny.

On the subject of delay, he would observe, that on some accounts it might be desirable to proceed with greater rapidity; but the sacrifice proposed did not seem too great for the advantage to be purchased by it: a year might seem long for the continuance of a bad system; but it was short, indeed, compared with the time generally required to remedy a bad system. The condition of human nature would, indeed, be far better than he supposed it to be, if such a deep-rooted, wide-spread, inveterate evil as slavery, so interwoven with the whole frame of society in those countries, could be removed by a single act of legislative benevolence. There was no such magic in legislation; the omnipotence of parliament could work no such miracles. Evils far less extensive than slavery, required far more time to be eradicated. They are sometimes, indeed, prematurely rapid in their growth, but they never fail to spin out their appointed time; they never abate one whit of their full demand upon human patience and human suffering in their decline and decay; they never finally disappear till they have visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generations. He did not concur in the delay, because he wished to stave off the result, but because he knew that it could not be avoided.

He did not wish to enter into the delicate question of the power of the mother country over her colonies: he was most ready to admit the right of parliament; but the exercise of that right might be attended with the utmost inconvenience and danger. If they dared, the effect would be a rebellion; but as they did not dare, it would occasion profound discontent and a rooted dislike. Besides, no man could deny that the best intended and best concerted measure of emancipation might be misunderstood by the negroes, and mischief thus occasioned. The chance of that mischief would be much increased by forcing the measure upon them. He did not say that the risk ought not to be incurred; but if the slaves saw power suddenly withdrawn from those hands where it was accustomed to reside, and transferred to those on the opposite side of the Atlantic, who they imagined would go all lengths in their favour, the danger might be imminent. He perfectly agreed with his noble friend, that we were not to be too sanguine as to the extinction of the power of the West-India legislature: all that was wanted of the colonists was to agree among themselves to the enactment of some good and wholesome law, by which the objects would be accomplished without the interference of the parliament of this country. The execution of the law, be whatever it might, must at all events be in the hands of the white population; and ignorance and reluctance on the part of the colonial assemblies, and others, might both be called forth to impede the progress of a compulsory measure. It had been often said, that in Ireland, with a population of the same blood and complexion, and differing only in religion, it was difficult to secure the due execution of the law. How much greater then would that difficulty be in the West Indies, where the distinction was between master and slave, white man and negro? The law transmitted for execution might be looked upon in our islands as a code of injustice to the whites, even

if it were considered in England a code of justice to the blacks; and, amid all the difficulties attending it, but little of the expected relief would be afforded to the unfortunate.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* condemned the conduct of the colonial legislatures in neglecting to give effect to the resolutions then on the table of their lordships House, and hoped the length of time that had elapsed since those resolutions had been agreed to by the House of Commons, without the concurrence of their lordships in them having been obtained, had not been understood by the colonists to have been caused by any difference of opinion on the subject. He had at all times endeavoured rather to abstain from discussing the subject himself, than to enter upon it, from the deep sense he entertained of its difficulty. He felt that it was a question which ought to be discussed without passion, and with reference also to the opinions and the interests of those with whom it was most desirable, if possible to co-operate. He had hoped that ere this, the time would have arrived, when the West-India planters, and the colonial legislatures would have been awakened to a sense of humanity and religion: and from humanity he would contend religion never could be separated. But he had been disappointed; and he felt particularly disappointed in the refusal of the West-India proprietors to secure to the slaves the means by which they could acquire property. He had entertained a hope that the colonial legislatures, would have at least so far entered into the views of the parliament of Great Britain; but he repeated his regret at his disappointment. He was the last man who would recommend the adoption of the course mentioned by his noble friend who spoke last, namely, to seize upon individual cases on which to found arguments against a system. It was not upon partial anecdotes, or isolated instances, that he founded his opinion, that it was time for the legislature of this country to interfere. That opinion was founded upon the proceedings of the colonists themselves in their houses of assembly; and on that ground he would call upon their lordships to give effect to the resolutions, by exhibiting a determination to see them adopted. It was essential to the character of the British nation; it was essential to the dignity of the British parliament; it was essential to the safety of the colonists themselves, that the amelioration of the condition of the slave population should take place with all possible despatch. He was afraid that he could not be contradicted, when he stated that, up to the present time, with the exception of one island, no steps had been taken in the West Indies to give legality to marriage. The only attempt to adopt a measure of this nature had taken place in the Bahamas; and the fact was lamentable, that every other island was without any regulation to govern this the most sacred of human ties. Could the West-India population be happy under such circumstances; and what were we to think of the legislature that could refuse its sanction to the introduction of a measure of this nature? He would wish to call the attention of their lordships to another point on which the local legislatures had been equally remiss. There had been no law passed for facilitating the manumission of slaves who might possess the means of purchasing their own freedom. Could there, he would ask, be a more satisfactory mode, both for the master and slave, than that the latter should obtain his freedom in this way? An example would thus be held out to other slaves to persevere in habits of industry, in order to effect their freedom at no very distant day. The good to be thus produced would be infinite; and the absence of such a law was much to be lamented. There was another point to which he wished to draw the attention of their lordships; namely, that no means had as yet been taken to prevent the punishment of women by means of the whip. He could go further in the dreadful catalogue, but he did not wish to enter upon it at present. He was however, free to confess, that he was not very sanguine in his expectations of the effect to be produced by the proposed resolutions. He quite agreed with the noble and learned lord on the woolsack, that we should endeavour to blend the safety of the planters with the freedom of the slaves. He also begged leave to agree with the noble earl opposite, in admitting that those measures should be carried into effect by the local legislature. Yet he never would consent to the principle, that the British parliament should withhold its power or right to interfere. He trusted that, if not among the colonial legislatures, at least in the colonies there would be found some among the white

population who would lend their willing assistance in bringing about that change in the condition of the slaves which the wisdom of parliament had thought proper to recommend. He was confident in his hopes that the subject would not rest where it was, and that if nothing was effected by the colonists in the current year, it would be brought before the House at the earliest period of the next session; and, in order to prevent delay, he wished to ask the noble earl whether directions had been given to the local authorities to call together the colonial assemblies at such an early period as would enable parliament to be in possession of the necessary information, soon after its next meeting? If this were done they would be enabled to judge what had been done in our colonies, and what further steps it would become the duty of parliament to take. He thought it right that some such course as this should be adopted by the noble earl, in order to give to the country some evidence that the proposed measures would at length be carried into effect. They had already waited three years, and they were now adding another year of doubt and delay, and it was the duty of ministers to show a desire to inquire into existing abuses in all their bearings, and a determination to enforce the resolutions adopted by parliament. He did not mean that they should lose sight of the interests of individuals; but he was then, and should be hereafter, prepared to contend, that those interests were most endangered by the present system; and if that system was not altered, the most disastrous consequences might ensue to those who thought themselves aggrieved by the proposed interference of parliament. There had been a general burst of feeling throughout the country upon this subject, and that feeling must be attended to, else the local governments, which at present resisted innovation, would be altogether overturned. He hoped that their lordships would cautiously but firmly persevere in the resolutions of that evening.

Earl *Bathurst* said, that he had already given instructions, that in Jamaica the house of Assembly should be convened as soon as the season would permit; and the same instructions had been given to all the other colonies.

The Bishop of *Bath and Wells* said, that after all that had been said and written on the subject of slavery, he little expected to be called on at that time of day, to prove that a system of slavery was incompatible with the Christian religion, of which he was a minister, and the British constitution, whose free and willing and obedient subject he professed himself to be. He did not mean to say—for he would not be borne out in the position—that there was any one positive precept in the religion of Christ which forbade slavery; on the contrary, it was undeniable that slavery was prevalent at the time of the first promulgation of the Christian faith; but this he did say, because it was true, that no man could take up the book of divine revelations, and read a page of it, without being convinced that the evils of such a practice were at variance with every principle of religion, and contrary to all the dictates of justice and humanity. On this point he might appeal to the law which was written on the heart of every one. Neither could the evils of slavery be reconciled to the true principles of political economy. Free labour must, in every sense, be more productive than the labour of slaves. The man who was actuated by the thought that he was toiling for his wife, his family, and himself, must use more strenuous exertions than he who was stimulated only by the taskmaster, who was goaded to work by the application of the whip, and who relaxed his exertions as soon as the humiliating incentive was withdrawn. Although, however, such were his opinions, he was not an advocate for precipitate and premature abolition. The evils of such a course would, he felt, be more noxious than the evils of slavery itself. It had always been his opinion, that the emancipation of the mind should precede the emancipation of the body. Religion and education should prepare the way for the approach of freedom. It was therefore with much pleasure that he had witnessed the resolutions brought forward by the government in 1823, for those resolutions were drawn up in the spirit of humanity and justice. They went to establish schools in the colonies, and to give to the slave population the benefits of our own form of church government. He was sorry, however, to observe, that those resolutions were not received by the colonial legislatures in the manner which they deserved; and hence arose the petitions upon which the noble lord who had lately sat down commented he thought with rather too much

severity. But in consequence of the petitions from different quarters, and the voice of the English people being raised on the subject, new propositions were about to be submitted to the colonial governments, which, he trusted, would lead to favourable results, and render petitions no longer necessary. He hoped that the resolutions brought forward that night would be passed without opposition, and that they would be received by the colonial legislatures in the manner which they were justly entitled to; otherwise, the voice of England would again be raised, and she would wipe out that dark and foul spot which at present stained her annals. These were the opinions which he entertained, had ever entertained, and were avowed in the petitions which he had presented, and these opinions he had always maintained with a view to the security of the colonies and the happiness of the slave population.

Lord *St. Vincent* stated, that, though not able to give the noble marquis opposite the satisfaction of hearing that the slave, when prepared with the means of purchasing his freedom, could demand it as a right, nevertheless, in the island of Jamaica, with which he (lord St. Vincent) was connected, he had been credibly informed that nearly four thousand slaves were voluntarily emancipated between the years 1820 and 1823. This was the more satisfactory, as well as the more honourable, as it arose from the mere spontaneous act of the master. In addition to what he had stated, the legislative body of the Island of Jamacia passed an act, by which slaves, under certain forms, notwithstanding any limitation, entail, debt, or other legal difficulties, might be emancipated. It was but fair to conclude, that the same feeling which had produced so considerable a manumission under many existing impediments, now that such impediments were removed, would operate in a much greater ratio. He (lord St. Vincent) had no doubt that the same generous impulse had equally operated in the other colonies; but not having the same means of information as to their local transactions, he could not state it as a fact.

With respect to the charge of contumacy which had been made by one or two of the noble lords, something was to be said in consequence of a prevalent understanding in the colonies, and most assuredly in Jamaica, that the example proposed by ministers was to be tried first as an experiment in those colonies, which were immediately under the control of the Crown. Whether that impression was right or wrong, it certainly did exist. This example was not set till 1824, and could not, therefore, if regarded as an experiment, be considered as an object of imitation, till its practicability was ascertained. On the meeting of the assembly of Jamaica, in 1825, a committee was appointed to bring in a bill for the admission of slave evidence, and that bill was not thrown out till after much discussion. Where there was full and fair deliberation, it could hardly be said there was contumacy.—He would beg leave to trouble their lordships a little further in consequence of the gross misrepresentation and delusion that prevailed, not only amongst the ignorant and inferior ranks, but amongst the higher orders; nay, even amongst their lordships. It was reported, and he believed truly reported, that a noble duke, whom every one regarded who did know him, and every one respected who did not know him, that this noble duke (Devonshire) should have said, at a recent county meeting, that he considered the claims of the West Indian to compensation, if his property were destroyed as the claim of a receiver of stolen goods. Had he been present at that meeting, he would have asked that noble duke, who stole those goods—who sold them—who pocketed the money for them?—who, but the people of England. The ancestor of that noble duke had taken a conspicuous part at the memorable era of the Revolution—at the passing of the Bill of Rights—but the Bill of Rights was the bill of wrongs to the sons of Africa. It was in consequence of a doubt whether the Bill of Rights opened the African trade, that the act of 9 and 10 of William and Mary (cap. 26) was passed. Before that period, the African slave trade was exclusively limited to a few chartered companies. But after the Bill of Rights this was deemed too precious for a chosen few, and was extended to all the good people of England. So precious, indeed, was it deemed, that whereas all other articles of that trade were subject to a duty of five or ten per cent, gold, silver, and silver ore, and slaves, were alone exempted from any. In fact, slaves were put on the same footing as gold and silver. He (lord St. Vincent) was descended from one of the receivers of that period. The

noble duke was descended from one of the licencers of the thieves. Had the noble duke been in his place, he (lord St. Vincent) would have called upon him to support him in his title to that estate which the ancestor of the one had bought under a system not only sanctioned but encouraged by the ancestor of the other. He begged leave to recommend that act of William and Mary to the consideration and attention of that noble duke and the other members of that House, and hoped that it would not be lost sight of by a learned member of the other House, who was said to be writing a history of that period.—Without troubling their lordships with a recital of further acts, he would just remind them of the period of 1774, when, upon an application from the colonies to abolish the slave trade, the answer was, by the mouth of lord Dartmouth, one of the ministers, "We cannot allow the colonies to check in any degree a traffic so beneficial to the nation."—It was too much, then, that those who had so largely contributed to produce the system which is now complained of, should turn round on those who had built up the superstructure, of which they had laid the foundation—that the "artifices necis" should dare to "charge the participes criminis" with the consequences of their own act. If the ear was distressed by sounds, or the eye offended by sights, which are not in unison with the present sensations of those acute organs, the West-Indian, when reproached with these, may reply, "Scelus exitiale Lacænæ, illa hæc monumenta reliquit." If the offspring nursed by such a parent has not in some rare instances yet acted as she ought, let England recollect that she is that parent, and that it is her own offspring of whom she complains. But, did he therefore mean to contend that England, as the parent, should not endeavour to wipe off the stain that attaches to herself and offspring—that she should not endeavour to correct the deformities of the system of her own creation? No; but let her not do it at the expense of the blood and treasure of that offspring, and add the injury of reproaches. —He regretted exceedingly that, in justice to themselves, in confirmation of the claim which the colonies have long since set up, and fairly set up, to a kind and humane system of management of their slaves, they did not yield to the wishes of the mother country, as expressed in the orders of council; that they did not ratify by law, what their own generous feelings had long since sanctioned in practice. He chiefly referred it to the irritation produced by the uncandid and unjust attacks of their enemies at home. But he sincerely hoped they would not confound friends and foes: let them not mix up in the same feeling those who hold out the hand of a friendly assistance, and those who may be suspected of very different motives.—He had, for the last twenty years, done every thing in his power to act up to the spirit of the resolutions, of all of which he approved. Nearly as far back as that time, he applied to bishop Porteus, to assist him in procuring a clergyman for his estate. Another West-India proprietor joined him in the same application. The bishop, however, distinctly stated, that there were not sufficient funds at command for that purpose, and that, owing to the heavy burthens of a most expensive war, it was impossible to look for assistance from government.

It had been said by a respectable gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) that the cup (meaning the cup of liberty) had been dashed from the eager and thirsting lips of the negro as he was about to drink. But the cup offered to the negro was in fact the cup of Circe, which would have intoxicated and disordered his head, and have only introduced confusion and bloodshed in the colonies. The cup of which he could drink, the cup containing the living water, was not dashed from his lips, but presented to him willingly by his master's hand, on a branch from the stock of our inestimable church establishment. In conclusion he stated, that he approved of the resolutions, and had every hope that the colonies would carry them into effect.

Lord *Suffield* expressed a hope, that the noble earl would give some more definite answer with respect to the expected early meeting of the different colonial Assemblies. It was of the utmost importance that parliament should be put in possession, at the earliest possible period, of the proceedings taken by the local legislatures, upon these resolutions, otherwise two years might elapse before further measures were adopted in this country.

Earl *Bathurst* said, he could only repeat that instructions had been sent out to the different islands to convene the Assemblies at the earliest possible period; and those instructions, no doubt, would be complied with.

The Bishop of *Ferns* said, that he should not have risen at that late hour, if it were not to obviate the impression which might prevail, from the circumstance that no petitions had been presented on the subject from Ireland, and that therefore his country did not participate in the feelings of the people of England. But, in fact, the feelings of the people of Ireland had been evinced on the subject long ago. When the restrictions on the trade of that country were first relaxed, an attempt was made to form companies for the purpose of carrying on the African slave trade; but that attempt had been put down by a single sentence from one individual. A meeting was called at Cork, and the persons who called it stated the great advantages of the trade; but an old man rose in the midst of those assembled, and in terms too coarse to be repeated, he uttered a malediction on the head of the first man who should contribute the least assistance in promoting so infamous an object. The imprecation (he hoped it was heard in mercy, and forgiven) had the desired effect. The project was abandoned, and from that time, which was forty years ago, to the present no man had been found to revive the subject. Thus the opinion of the people of Ireland upon this question might be said to have been long since practically declared. He thought it necessary to state these particulars, in order to obviate any imputation that might arise, in consequence of no petition having been presented from Ireland against the slave trade at this particular juncture. For himself, he had only to say, that the resolutions before their lordships had his most cordial concurrence, embodying, as they did, the solemn advice of both Houses of parliament to the colonial governments. He thought that they were, in their present shape, as well calculated as possible to produce a good effect; and that if they were accompanied by any threat, they would only tend to create intemperance and ill-will, instead of amicable acquiescence.

The Resolutions were agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, March 7.

EDUCATION IN IRELAND.] Sir *John Newport* rose, to move for the production of an account of the application of all sums granted in the last session for the furtherance of education in Ireland. He called the attention of the House to the extraordinary fact, that while taxes were annually imposed on the people to erect new seminaries of education in Ireland, the existing seminaries were suffered to fall into complete decay. He particularly instanced the case of the school at Middleton, in the county of Cork. In 1812, the commission appointed in 1806 made a report upon the schools supported by private endowment. In that report it was stated that the school at Middleton was founded in 1696 by the countess of Orkney, and that it was endowed by her with an estate of 2,000 acres, which, within twenty years after, was leased out for 200*l.* a-year by the trustees, on a lease of lives renewable for ever. It was further stated, that the estate was then worth 2,000*l.* a-year, and that the power of the trustees to make such leases, appeared to the commissioners very questionable. The school, to which was attached a house for the master, had formerly been attended by a large number of scholars, but at present it was without a roof, and in total decay; the master had retired to Dublin, where he received his salary, and the House which he ought to have occupied, was occupied by a sergeant of police. He wished to know how this had come to pass, considering that the endowed schools were placed under the care of the commissioners of education, who were authorized to ask for an advance of money out of the consolidated fund for the repair of such schools as wanted it, upon the security of their surplus rents? He was greatly surprised at the decay into which this school had fallen, as Middleton was a healthy village, at a considerable distance from any large town, and admirably well adapted for all the purposes of scholastic education. He trusted that, when the House was again called upon for grants of money for the furtherance of education in Ireland, it would take care that those grants were made after some settled plan, and would not defeat with one hand the bounty which it doled out with the other. He would now move, for "an account of the application of all sums granted during the last session for the furtherance of Education in Ireland."

Mr. *Goulburn* said, he was not able to state at that moment the ultimate determination of government on the subject of education in Ireland. It must necessarily be influenced by the reports which the commissioners might make, and the plans they might recommend. As far as

the Irish government had yet had the plans of the commissioners before it, it had not been backward in carrying them into effect. Orders had been given to suspend all admissions into the chartered schools which had fallen under the reprehension of the commissioners. On this head there was a considerable reduction in the estimates of this year, and he trusted that that reduction would gradually take place in each succeeding year. With regard to the school at Middleton, he could only say, that as it was never under his cognizance, he could not give the House any precise information. At the time the commissioners of education made their report, that school did not receive their approbation; but as it was found to be under the direction of private trustees and special governors, they considered it not to fall within the scope of their jurisdiction. With regard to the decay into which the school had fallen, the sum necessary to repair it was 2,000*l.* Now the surplus of the revenue of the school was 10*l.* a year; and how was it possible that an advance of 2,000*l.* out of the consolidated fund could be made upon the security of such a sum? A legal opinion had been taken as to the right of the trustees to grant the lease which they had granted; but it had not been such as to justify any interference on the part of the governors to upset it. The school was a private foundation; the master was appointed by the governors; the power of visiting it was in the governors; and they alone were responsible for any dereliction of duty committed by the officers whom they appointed.

Mr. *Spring Rice* supported the motion.

Mr. *F. Lewis* assured the House that the reports of the commissioners of education would all be presented by the time appointed, with the exception of the report on the college of Maynooth, which would be postponed for a year. Great, but, he trusted, not insuperable, difficulties opposed themselves to the plans which the commissioners had hitherto recommended. They had not yet abandoned those plans, and he, for one, still entertained hopes that they would be ultimately successful.

Mr. *Plunkett* said, that the school at Middleton was one on a private foundation merely, and did not come within the jurisdiction of the commission. At one time the school alluded to had been under the immediate inspection of a gentleman who had been a distinguished member of the university of Dublin, and then the scholars were numerous, and the funds flourishing; but since that time it certainly had gone to ruin.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that if these schools on a private foundation, from the terms of their charter, or from any other cause, did not fall within the operation of the act of 1813, he was prepared to say that means should be immediately devised for subjecting them to an inquiry as rigid as that which might be extended to any school of public foundation, or under the immediate superintendence of the government. It never could have been intended by the legislature, at the time it authorized a commission to inquire into the state of schools of public foundation, that they should totally pass by schools erected by the grants of individuals, when those grants were manifestly intended for the public benefit. Still less could they have intended to pass by private foundations, where the income was stated at 200*l.* a year, and leave the whole of that sum to the maintenance of a master, without any attention to the school-house and the scholars, if it was true, that the lands from which such incomes were derived, amounted to 2,000 acres, which, if properly let, might bring 2,000*l.*, but, from long leases upon lives, produced only 200*l.* a year. He thought there was an additional reason why the power of inquiry should be immediately extended to schools of every description, when it was proved that sums had been left for the education of children, and when, from such abuses, no scholars at present could be found. And he saw no objection why the present commissioners should not be empowered to pursue that inquiry in the same manner into private schools, as they were already authorized to do in the case of those of what were called public foundation.

Sir *John Newport* observed, that the person through whose influence these leases had been granted, which cut down properties of 2,000*l.* a year to less than 200*l.*, was a Mr. Broderick, a member of the Irish house of parliament, and a brother of lord chancellor Middleton. The state of all the schools ought, in his opinion, to be made a matter of report.

The motion was agreed to.

COMMITMENTS FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT.] Mr. *Hume* rose to move for a

return of the number of persons confined in the Fleet and other prisons, for contempt, as it was called, of the Court of Chancery. He had moved, in 1820, for a similar return, including the number of persons who, being in confinement for such contempts, had died during the eight preceding years. It appeared by that return, that twenty persons had died during the period mentioned—some after a confinement of ten months, others after being in prison thirty-two years. Among the persons confined under the orders of the court of Chancery, many were in such a state of poverty, that they were unable to procure copies of the bills, for not answering which they had incurred this charge of contempt. The expense of procuring copies of these bills was enormous! they were to be paid for at the rate of 10*d.* per folio; and when the voluminous nature of Chancery proceedings was considered, it would be clear that many of the persons called upon to put in answers were wholly unable to do so. Those bills were filed without any regard to truth. The plaintiffs were at liberty to tell any lies they pleased, and unless the individual against whom they were filed had money in the first place to obtain copies, and in the next to fee lawyers, he had no chance of avoiding the imprisonment to which this court doomed him. It appeared by the return which he held in his hand, that William Dawson was committed to the Fleet prison on the 12th of January 1818, and his wife Elizabeth, on the 1st of May, 1819. From that time to the present they remained there for an alleged contempt of court, and, as they stated, were wholly unacquainted with the plaintiff, and with the reasons of the bill filed against them. There were many others who had been confined under the vague allegation of having incurred a contempt of court, and whose only offence was their ignorance of the forms of the court, and their poverty, which disabled them from adopting the expensive measures necessary for putting in an answer. By the return made on the 11th of July 1820, it appeared that there were thirty-one persons then in confinement. He begged the attention of the secretary of state for the home department to this statement, because he thought that among the useful reforms which the right hon. gentleman had introduced into the system of administering the law of the land, none could be more properly or more beneficially introduced than some alteration of the proceedings in the court of Chancery. He (Mr. Hume) had taken the trouble to send a person to the Fleet prison, with the list in his hand, to inquire of the warden what had become of the persons whose names had been returned in it. The warden, for some reason which he could not understand, had refused to satisfy that inquiry; perhaps he was alarmed at the long array of names, and thought that some use was to be made of the information which he might afford. As he was, therefore, unable to state any more than what the return contained, he should confine himself to that. It seemed that Hannah Barber had been committed on the 30th of January 1789, under a writ of rebellion. He did not know exactly the nature of that proceeding, but he understood that if a man owed him 10*l.* it was necessary to state that he had attacked him with swords, staves, and knives, and in rebellion against his majesty. In a suit by the creditors of one Thomas Green against Hannah Barber and others, the defendant was committed for contempt in not obeying an order of the court, for payment of 406*l.* into the Bank of England. She remained in the Fleet until her death, which happened since the return, and after an imprisonment of between 30 and 40 years. He understood that by a clause in the Insolvent Debtors' act, a person might be discharged from custody for contempt, when the cause of imprisonment was only the non-payment of money, but that the court had no power to release from the costs. Was it not too much to say, that in a country like this, the criminal law was more mild in its effects than the civil? If a man were sentenced under the former to transportation or imprisonment, he knew the limit of his punishment; but having once fallen under the sentence of the court of Chancery, there was no knowing how long his imprisonment might continue. Such a system was better adapted to the arbitrary jurisprudence of Constantinople or Algiers than to this free and enlightened country. Another instance in the return was that of George Pigot, who had been sent to prison under a rule of court, ordering an attachment for want of answer to an amended bill. This man had been in prison for more than twenty years, during which time he had no means of obtaining a copy of the amended bill, nor of procuring a person

to draw an answer to it. Anne Bretner was committed under a writ of habeas corpus from the Exchequer, for not appearing to a bill, and she was also dead. He now put it to the right hon. gentleman, whether this was right or not; whether some inquiry ought not to take place before persons were doomed to such imprisonments, as to the nature of their alleged contempts? and whether an end ought not to be put to so persecuting and oppressive a system? He understood that there were two instances in which the present lord chancellor, learning that the parties were unable, through poverty, to put in answers, had sent for them, and paid out of his own pocket the necessary expenses which their detention had occasioned. If his lordship saw the hardship of such cases, it was extraordinary that, being as he was at the head of the law, he had not brought forward some regulation to prevent such monstrous abuses for the future. He would only state one more case. It was that of Samuel Monson, who had been committed in 1813 for want of an answer, and who, although he had put in that answer ten years ago, was still detained for costs. Two other persons were in custody; one for speaking to a young lady, a ward of the court, after being ordered not to do so, and the other for cutting crops on an estate, in disobedience to an injunction of the court. He wished not only that the imprisonment which was the subject of his present complaint were done away, but that imprisonment for debt altogether was put a stop to; for he was convinced, that for one creditor who obtained payment of his debt, there were ten debtors who were made much worse members of society by it. The facility with which credit was given was injurious to society, and he could see no injustice in taking from those who were so ready to give it the power of imprisoning their debtors. Another, and the greatest hardship which attended this system of imprisonment by the court of Chancery was, that even if a man was ready to put in his answer, it would not be received until he was purged of his contempt; that was to say, until he had paid all the costs which had been incurred. The hon. member then moved for "A return of the several persons who have been committed to the Fleet prison and other gaols in England and Wales for contempts under process issuing out of his majesty's courts of Chancery and Exchequer, since the 11th July 1820, with copies of their respective commitments with respect to such contempts; stating what persons have died, or have been discharged, and at what time, and how many now remain in custody; also, a return of the number of persons that were confined for contempt on the 11th July 1820, and how many of them have died, been discharged, and at what time, or now remain in custody."

The *Attorney-General* said, that as he understood the return now moved for was a continuation of that formerly made, he could, of course, have no objection to it. Every body was aware of the importance of this subject; but put, as it was, in this general way, he should not feel himself justified if he took up the time of the House by any statement at present. His right hon. friend would soon present to the House the report of the commission appointed to inquire into the practice of the court of Chancery, and it would probably then become his duty to propose certain bills to carry into effect the alterations in the present practice which that report might suggest. He could assure the House that every attention would be paid to the subject. With respect to the contempt incurred for non-payment of costs, if it were as stated by the hon. gentleman, he was ready to admit that the provision of the Insolvent Debtors' act, which already went to release persons confined for non-payment of money ordered by the court, ought to be extended, so as to relieve them from imprisonment for costs. The other cases were of a very different nature. Some remedy ought to be applied, if any thing like oppression or unfairness could be shown to exist under the present system; but it was impossible to meet all the views of the hon. gentleman on this subject, without going the length of abolishing the court of Chancery altogether. In a bill, for example, filed for the purpose of obtaining discoveries of the utmost importance to the justice of a case; if the defendant obstinately refused to make the discovery sought of him, what was to be done? There was no mode consistent with the law of England by which he could be compelled to do what justice required, except by imprisonment. But, the moment he put in his answer, he was released from confinement. Where was the hardship in this? If there were a hardship, and if it was thought that such a power ought no

longer to exist, the court of Chancery must be abolished; because there was no other mode of enforcing its decrees. The hon. member had stated that the ignorance of parties exposed them to offend unintentionally against the law. He had been totally misinformed upon this point. No party was called upon to put in an answer until he had been warned by subpœna, and notices of the time at which he was to do so. It was only because he disregarded these notices, and refused to obey the order of the court, that he was imprisoned. If a party chose to remain in prison rather than do that which the interests of justice demanded of him, was the House to assume that his imprisonment was oppressive, and that there had been no inquiry into the merits of his case? The basis of any investigation which the House would direct into this practice, ought to be, that the order had been properly made, and that it should have been obeyed. He by no means meant to say, that if a person was unable to pay a sum which the court had ordered him to pay, he ought to be kept in prison for life. He agreed that to such a law, if it existed, a remedy ought to be applied; but after the statements which he had heard the hon. gentleman advance in that House he was not disposed to rely implicitly on any fact which he might assert. He would read the clause of the Insolvent Debtors' act alluded to by the hon. gentleman, and the House would see with what safety they could trust to the accuracy of the hon. gentleman. [The Attorney-general then read the clause, which, after providing for the release of prisoners confined for contempt in not paying money ordered by the court of Chancery, goes on to provide the same relief for persons detained in prison for non-payment of costs]. This might be taken as a fair specimen of the hon. gentleman's accuracy. The act of which he had spoken was passed in 1812, and contained the very remedy which the hon. gentleman had so strenuously proposed. It was obvious that the only means the court of Chancery had of enforcing obedience to its decrees, was by the imprisonment of the refractory parties; but if they obtained their liberation on complying with the order of the court, no evil could be said to exist. He stated this as a general proposition, and he would add to it this qualification—that if the cause of detention was merely the non-payment of money, and the prisoner was unable to pay, then he was entitled to the benefit of the laws which had been made for the relief of other debtors who had no means of discharging their debts. Upon this broad distinction the House ought to act. When the subject came before the House in a different shape, he should feel it his duty to attempt to obviate all that might seem to be difficult, or that might occasion any hardship or unfairness. The system of that court, in general, was one which deserved universal veneration; for its constant tendency was, to protect and secure the property of the people. He was convinced that if the court of Chancery was not supported, it would be impossible to keep up the courts of common law; because, unless they were modified by the court of Chancery, they would become such a means of producing evil and inconvenience, that they could not be allowed to exist. The principles upon which the court of Chancery was established were so sound and so admirable, that he would defy the ingenuity of man, or the collective wisdom of any body of men, to devise a system more beneficial to the community.

Mr. *Lockhart* thought, that if the process of contempt should be done away, or even weakened, all the usefulness of the court of Chancery would be destroyed. It was the only means the court had of protecting the interests of the suitors, and nobody could complain of it but those whose evil deeds exposed them to the punishment which the laws had a right to inflict upon them. He did not agree at all in the propriety of the act, which enabled persons when they had spent the money of the orphan, or the minor, to clear themselves from the effects of their obstinacy or iniquity. He thought that such a clause took a very great liberty with the property of the suitors of that court, and tended rather to promote injustice than justice in its proceedings. He trusted that a process, which was absolutely necessary to enable the court to perform its functions, would still be maintained.

The motion was agreed to.

PROMISSORY NOTES BILL.] On the order of the day for the third reading of this bill,

Lord *A. Hamilton* said, that he would give his support to the measure, not because he thought it the best that might have been proposed for the adoption of

parliament, but because it would, imperfect as it was, tend in some degree to amend the defects of the present system of country banking. He considered the introduction of the clause for authorizing the Bank to issue small notes for three years longer, a departure from the principle of the bill. He was surprised that ministers had consented to that measure. It had been stated as an axiom of political economy, that small notes and coin could not circulate together; how, then, could they justify themselves, for permitting the issue of small notes for three years longer?

Mr. *Calcraft* said, he had intended to move an amendment at the present stage of this bill, but upon reflection he had abandoned that intention, and would content himself with declaring his opposition to the measure, with respect to which he would take the sense of the House, if he saw any members inclined to support him. He could look upon the measure in no other light than as a bill of pains and penalties against country bankers—a class of persons who had been most hardly dealt with. He thought that government, by the extensive issues of their own accommodation paper, had been greater encouragers of speculation than the country bankers; and was of opinion, that it would be impossible to obtain a sufficient quantity of metallic currency to supply the wants of the manufacturing districts. During the course of his parliamentary experience, he had never known a measure more calculated to produce mischief than the one under consideration.

Sir *R. Heron* thought, that the country bankers had been shamefully treated by ministers and the parliament. The only measure which would give relief to the country was an immediate and extensive curtailment of the public expenditure.

Mr. *J. Martin* said, that much unmerited odium had been thrown upon the country bankers. In a paper which purported to be a return of the number of bankrupt bankers, the names of several individuals were inserted who had never committed an act of bankruptcy, and of others who had superseded their commissions. In common fairness the hon. member for Aberdeen was bound to move for a return of the names of the country bankers who had superseded their commissions of bankruptcy.

Mr. *Robertson* feared the House had overlooked the great difficulties which would accrue to this country from the quantity of gold to be drawn from the continent by the operation of this bill. Throughout the whole continent, he supposed there was about 200 millions of specie. Of this, not less than 50 millions would be required to establish a gold circulation in this country. Now, the effect of withdrawing that amount from the continent would be to raise the value of gold one-half; and to suppose that its value would be raised one-third in this country, was a moderate calculation. Now, could the chancellor of the Exchequer get the taxes paid to their present amount in a currency increased in value one-third? Then, again, we were to be called upon to lower our corn to a level with that of the continent; and, putting these two circumstances together, he would leave the House to judge of the consequences. The price of corn now was 60*s.* a quarter; and when the change of value in the currency came into operation, it would be down at least to 30*s.* He was of opinion, that the banking system of the country, as at present established, was necessary to its prosperity, as creating a degree of artificial capital, which would not otherwise exist.

Mr. *Carus Wilson* spoke of the necessity of country bankers making their notes payable in the place where they were issued. In consequence of this salutary practice, the bankers of Westmoreland and Cumberland had been able to stand against the storm. In Lancaster, a degree of swindling was going on, in the absence of bank-notes, by the circulation of improvident bills of exchange. For the small notes of the Bank of England he entertained a great dislike, from the facility they afforded to forgery. He hoped, if they were to be circulated throughout the country, that means would be resorted to to make them less liable to imitation.

Sir *F. Blake* said, that if he were asked whether he would prefer a metallic or paper currency, he should certainly vote for the former. But, having once begun with the paper, we could not stop short. The principal object of this bill was, to circumscribe the issues in paper, and thereby accelerate the return to cash payments. It was on that principle that he had supported it. But he did not understand why all the advantages of the bill should be topsy-turvy in favour of the Bank of England; nor why that Bank should be shown greater favour than the country banks, as to the privilege of issuing notes

up to the 10th of October. No notes were so easily forged as those of the Bank of England. He understood, the chancellor of the Exchequer meant to extend this measure to Scotland; but he begged to ask that right hon. gentleman, whether he had well studied the Scotch character before he had made up his mind on the subject? He was quite sure that the people of that country would not receive that measure, unless it was forced upon them by act of parliament.

The House then divided: For the third reading 108; against it 9: majority 99.

List of the Minority.

Benett, J.	Palmer, C. F.
Calvert, N.	Robertson, A.
Heron, sir R.	Wood, ald.
Heygate, ald.	TELLERS.
Hume, J.	Calcraft, J.
Lockhart, J.	Martin, J.

Mr. *Abercromby* objected strongly to the power given to the Bank of England of issuing notes to the 10th of October next. He thought it was to be regretted that those words had found their way into the bill; for it gave to the Bank the power of manufacturing as many notes as they pleased. It plainly appeared that ministers had been misinformed as to the danger of contracting the circulation of the country bankers. The effect of the amendment was, to destroy all the small country notes. What was the value of the responsibility of the Bank? As to the responsibility of government, he was at a loss to know what it amounted to. The doctrine maintained in that House (and in which he concurred) was, that the Bank should consult their own interest, and not be subject to the control of government. He supported the bill; but he did it with regret since the introduction of this amendment. In order to put his opinion upon record, he meant to move that instead of the 10th of October, the 5th of February be inserted.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* moved a clause, by way of rider to the bill, the effect of which was, to exempt checks or draughts on bankers from the operation of the bill; which was agreed to.

Mr. *Hume* observed, that great stress had been laid on the quantity of paper in circulation. Now, he thought, that although no correct deductions could be made from the amount of paper currency on particular days, yet it was desirable that returns should be made by the country bankers, as well as by the Bank of England, of the amount of their paper in circulation. He would therefore move a clause requiring country bankers to make monthly returns of the amount of their notes in circulation to be published at the discretion of the Treasury.

Mr. *Hobhouse* seconded the motion. In the progress of this measure through the House, two propositions had, he said, been offered, neither of which had been agreed to; one was for securing the issues of country bankers by deposits; the other was for authorizing a summary process of compelling country bankers to pay in coin. His hon. friend had now offered a third, the object of which was, that the country bankers should condescend to give the country some account of the amount of their issues. It had been said, that the House had been legislating against the country bankers; whereas the House had been legislating for the country, and not for any particular interest. We had now no certain knowledge of the issues of the country bankers, and the House could not legislate properly without that knowledge. He thought his hon. friend might have gone further in his motion than he had done; for it was but just that those who dealt in the coin and circulation of the country should be similarly circumstanced with other traders. If the banking system was not put on a solid foundation, the country would soon be in a worse situation than at present. Fair as his hon. friend's proposition was, he supposed that, like the others, it would be rejected. He wished the chancellor of the Exchequer would imitate the conduct of his right hon. colleague. There was not an impartial man in the country who would not say that the president of the Board of Trade had acted on sound and just principles with regard to the silk trade. If the chancellor of the Exchequer had come down to the House and explained himself with the same frankness and firmness as the right hon. gentleman had done, in that admirable speech which he had listened to with the greatest pleasure, he would have done himself much credit. He should not have minded the obstacles cast in his way. He should not have minded the loss of votes in parliament, nor the clamour out of doors; but he should have pursued the straight-forward course, and the country would have supported him.

Mr. *John Smith* said, that the appoint-

ment of a committee in the earlier stage of the present proceedings would have saved the country from a great deal of unnecessary perplexity and alarm. As for the proposition of security referred to by the hon. member who had last spoken, it appeared to him decidedly objectionable. The instant the stamp upon a Bank note was such as to make that note, in the view of the receiver, perfectly secure, that instant there would be an end to metallic currency altogether. As for the project of compelling country banks to furnish accounts of their circulation, he did not object to its principle; but he objected to introducing it at a moment like the present, when the country bankers had already been most unfairly treated.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that he resisted the present motion, not at all in consequence of any representation from the country bankers, but because he thought it was, upon its own merits, open to objection. If any banking companies were established under the bill which was to be read that night a second time, or any chartered companies—any companies to whom peculiar privilege was to be given—he should have no objection to demand some sort of account; but, particularly at the present moment, he was adverse to putting the Treasury in possession of the private concerns of individual bankers; and there were reasons why government would be better kept without such information. The hon. member said that he did not wish to make the publication in the Gazette imperative, but would leave it to the discretion of ministers. Now, he thought that ministers would be better without such discretion. It was also to be in the judgment of ministers, whether to lay the accounts received before the House; but it was possible that the House might call for the accounts against the judgment of ministers. At all events, the clause, as it was proposed, was inoperative; because it provided no penalty in case of neglect to return a true account; and this was the more material, as cases might be imagined in which the temptation to give an inaccurate statement would be almost irresistible.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* opposed the introduction of the clause into this bill, with the objects of which it had no connection; whether advisable, as a matter of future regulation or otherwise.

Mr. *Pearse* said, it was a mistaken notion to suppose that there was no control over the Bank in its issues. The fact of the notes being payable in gold was itself a control. Besides, it need not be apprehended that many of these notes would be issued, as sovereigns were generally preferred, of which three millions had been issued since Christmas. The small notes, on the other hand, had been issued in very small quantities; as the Bank put out as few as possible. The Bank knew the difficulty of preventing forgery; for none of the schemes for accomplishing that object had been successful.

Mr. Alderman *Heygate* thought that the amount of notes in circulation should be laid before the public, and gave it as his opinion, that one-pound notes issued on government security, would be preferable to those of the Bank of England, or of any other bank.

Mr. *Ellice* wished to know from the secretary for the Home Department, whether government were at all responsible for any over-issue of notes. He certainly understood the right hon. gentleman to say, on a former occasion, that not only the Bank, but the government were responsible for any exercise of that power beyond due discretion. The fact just mentioned by the hon. director proved, that there would be no danger in agreeing to the clause.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, that when the small notes were issued in December, it was considered a peculiar measure, and had the sanction of government; consequently, so far as regarded the issue of those notes since that period to this, government should bear the responsibility. But, as a general measure, they were not at all implicated.

Mr. *Monck* observed, that although there was no penalty attached to the violation of the clause, yet such violation might be punished as a misdemeanor.

The House divided: for Mr. Hume's clause 24; against it 143: majority 119.

List of the Minority.

Abercromby, hon. J.	Johnson, col.
Althorp, visc.	Knight, R.
Duncannon, visc.	Macdonald, hon. J.
Evans, W.	Monck, T. B.
Ellice, E.	Newman, R.
Guise, sir W.	Ord, W.
Graham, sir S.	Pares, T.
Grenfell, P.	Russell, lord G. W.
Heygate, ald.	Tierney, rt. hon. G.
Heron, sir R.	Warre, J. A.

Webb, G.	TELLERS.
Wood, alderman.	Hume, J.
Wilson, sir R.	Hobhouse, J. C.
Wyvill, M.	

Mr. *Hume* then proposed a clause to give remedy, by summary process, against country bankers refusing to pay their small notes in gold coin. He wished for security to the holders of the one-pound notes; but if the House did not agree to make cash payments compulsory, there would be no such security. The chancellor of the Exchequer, on bringing in this Bill, had said, that security to the holders of small notes was his object. Could he therefore consent to pass this bill without that security? As the bill now stood, there must be an action, so that it might be one or six months before the value of the note could be recovered; and the action might cost 10*l.* or 50*l.* It was clear that such a state of the law gave no security to the poor man. Without this clause there would, in reality, be a suspension of cash payments. The clause which he should move was that which had been negatived by the committee on the bill; it was an exact copy of the summary process clause in the 37 Geo. 3rd, with the alteration of "ten days," instead of "three days."

Mr. *J. Smith* said, that if the hon. member's clause passed, not a respectable country banker would ever issue another one-pound note; and those which were out already they would get in as fast as possible. The fact was, that a remedy for refusal to pay in gold already existed. A one-pound note might be protested for non-payment just as regularly as a bill of exchange; and the cost of that first step —which the banker would be liable to pay—would be 22*s.*

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* remarked, that the chief instances of grievance brought forward by the hon. member for Montrose, had been from Scotland, where, it appeared, this summary process existed, and whence, it should seem, by the hon. member's own showing, it was utterly useless.

Colonel *Johnson* observed, that the remedy was inefficient. The banker might be liable to pay the 22*s.* for protest, but the labourer must pay it on the spot. And where was he to get it?

The clause was negatived.

Mr. Abercrombie then proposed to leave out the words "10th of October, 1826," and to insert "5th of Feb. 1826," instead thereof, which was negatived.

The bill was then passed.

ARMY ESTIMATES.] The resolutions of the committee of supply to which the Army Estimates were referred, were reported to the House. On the question, that the report be now read,

Mr. *Hobhouse* rose and said, that it was his intention, in pursuance of the notice which he had given, to propose a specific reduction of the number of troops which his majesty's ministers had thought fit to call on the House to vote as necessary for the military service of the country. The present, he knew, was rather an inauspicious moment for bringing forward a subject of so much importance; but he hoped that gentlemen would listen to him for a few moments, while he stated his reasons for considering the present as the most improper period that could be selected for proposing so large a military establishment as ministers now demanded from the House. The noble Secretary at War had told them that it was easy for gentlemen on the opposition side of the House, to declaim on such topics as the danger of keeping up a standing army, and the necessity which existed for the reduction of taxation. It might be easy or not; but that circumstance depended on the taste and temper of the audience to whom the declamation was addressed. Now, if (as he believed it would be admitted was the case) the noble lord had the audience in his favour, it was much easier for him to indulge in observation on the opposite topics—to argue that such and such reduction were not possible —than for those to whom the noble lord had alluded, to work up, with any profit or effect, those trite and worn-out subjects, which had been so often expatiated on within the walls of parliament, and passed by with total disregard. Now, the noble lord, in the speech which he delivered when he proposed the army estimates, had given the House no reason whatever for continuing the present large military establishment in time of peace; and still less had he assigned any ground for the increase which he had proposed; for, though it was comparatively small, still it was an increase; and in this period of public pressure, it was the bounden duty of ministers, if they asked for a large standing army, in this the eleventh year of peace, to come down with something like cogent arguments in support of such a proposition. An observation had been

made by an hon. member on a former evening, that before ministers called on the House for those enormous supplies, the chancellor of the Exchequer ought to have laid before the country something like a financial statement—that prior to the application for those supplies, the House should have been correctly informed of the situation of the financial resources of the country. Nothing of the kind had been done, and all they had heard, inside and outside of the doors of parliament, was, that there was a great difference between the state of the country in the present and in the last year—that all the happy prospects of wealth and prosperity were unfortunately overclouded, and that distress prevailed in every quarter. Surely, when this was the case, parliament ought not to tolerate an augmented scale of expenditure. He would call to the recollection of gentlemen the vote of the House of Commons in 1822; and if nothing had since occurred in the foreign or domestic relations of the country to justify an increased military force, then he would call on those who held and ought to guard the purse of the nation, to reduce that augmentation which had unfortunately been made to the army subsequently to the year 1822. He did not mean to contend that the country could not pay it; but he would assert that the country, however able, ought not to pay it. Unless ministers could show that these establishments were necessary for the dignity of the Crown, the tranquillity of the country, or for securing to the nation that lofty position in which it ought to stand, they should be steadily refused by parliament. The weight of proof, as to the necessity of such establishments, lay entirely with ministers. In 1825, the amount of taxation was 52,000,000*l*. And, what was it in 1821? The amount of positive taxation was then very nearly 1,000,000*l*. less than in 1825; and yet, in 1821, the House deemed it necessary, under the sanction of ministers, and loudly called on by the agricultural interests, and by none more so than by the hon. member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes), to come to an unanimous vote, recommending that every possible reduction that could be made in the different departments, and particularly in the more extended establishments, without detriment to the public service, should be effected immediately. The noble lord (Castlereagh), then at the head of his majesty's government, declared that the business of the country could not be carried on if the reduction of a single soldier took place. The hon. member for Aberdeen moved for a reduction of 10,000 men, and his proposition was negatived. Well, however, did he recollect, that very shortly afterwards the noble Secretary at War came down to the House, and stated that ministers had been able to make a reduction of 12,300 men, and that the reduction would have been carried still further, if it had not been for the disturbed state of Ireland. That country was now in a state of tranquillity. So were the colonies. Why, then, in a period of profound peace, should this immense force be continued? Above all, why should it be augmented? When an attempt was made to keep up the military establishment in 1816, lord Grenville, who was not then in his majesty's councils, but who would not do any thing to thwart unnecessarily the measures of government, had said, in a speech delivered by him elsewhere, that it was useless to discuss minor matters, so long as we kept up this enormous military establishment, which cut at the root of the British constitution. In the last session of parliament, the noble lord opposite proposed an increase of 13,000 men. The noble lord disclaimed the state of Ireland as being the cause; but many others who supported the augmentation, and among others the Knight of Kerry, did consider the situation of Ireland to be the true reason for proposing this increase. The noble lord at that period told the House, that the situation of the colonies demanded the augmentation; and, notwithstanding the vote of 1821, and the reduction effected in 1822, the increase was granted, because the noble lord declared that such an increase was absolutely necessary, if they paid a due regard to the comfort of the soldiers on foreign stations. If, however, such relief were necessary for the colonies, it did not follow that so large a force should be kept up at home. The force kept up here was the very worst that could be devised for giving relief to the colonies. Why were there so many household troops, and so large a number of cavalry regiments? They were not only useless, but, in his mind, it was unconstitutional to continue them. He wished to know when they were to come to an end of this system? At what period were they likely to discover that the standing army was extensive enough? He saw no end to the

system. It was not bounded by 87,000 men, by 107,000 men, or by any indefinite number which might be proposed at any future session. The present was a most opportune moment for those who had joined in the resolution of 1821 to say, not only that there should be no further augmentation of the military establishment, but that it should be brought back to what it was reduced to in 1822, when the number then voted was declared by ministers to be quite sufficient for the service of the country. There were now 32,670 soldiers in England, and no less than 15,000 on the recruiting service; while, in 1792, there were only 17,000 military in the whole country. Ministers had no pretext whatever for the increase of the military force between 1822 and 1826; and the object of his amendment would be to reduce the military establishment to the standard of 1822. The hon. gentleman concluded with moving, by way of amendment, "That it appears to this House, that the regular military force of the country, exclusive of the troops employed in India, amounted in the year 1822 to 69,088 men, and that according to the estimate now presented to the House, the same description of force is stated at 87,240 men, being an increase over and above the number employed in the year 1822 of 18,152 men:—That it appears to this House, that no change has taken place either in the foreign relations, or in the internal condition of the country, since the year 1822, which can justify so large an augmentation of the standing army; and that, in order to return, as early as possible, to the military establishment of that period, it is expedient to reduce the number of regular troops for the service of the United Kingdom and the colonies, exclusive of India, to 77,000 men."

Colonel *Johnson* seconded the motion.

Lord *Palmerston* said, that although he could not agree in the proposition of the hon. gentleman, yet he was not disposed to object to the general principle which he had laid down; namely, that it was incumbent on the House to apportion, as scrupulously as possible, the amount of the military force to the actual wants of the country. Gentlemen, of course, had a right to make use of these anniversary occasions, for the purpose of making their observations, and of recording the opinions which they entertained on these particular subjects; but though the general principle on which they proceeded was good, the results to which it led them were often erroneous. He had most distinctly declared last year the grounds on which he called for an augmentation of 13,000 men; and with very few exceptions the House concurred in the force and justice of the reasons which he then assigned. At that time he explicitly denied that any part of that increase was rendered necessary by the internal state either of this country or of Ireland. The hon. member had asserted, that some gentlemen had concurred in that augmentation, because the state of Ireland seemed to require it. All he could say was, that he did not call for the increase, either then or now, on account of the situation of Ireland. The plain grounds were, the state of the colonial service. But the hon. member said; "If a smaller force was sufficient in 1822, why have you asked for a larger force since?" The fact was, that in 1822 the government anxious as they ought to be to yield to the general feeling of the House and of the country, consented to a reduction, which, in their sober judgment, they felt would be greater than they could adhere to, with a due regard to the proper performance of their duty to the country. Having tried this reduced system for two or three years and finding that it did not succeed, they felt it necessary to declare, that the experiment had failed, and to ask for an augmentation. He did not mean to go into a detail of all the garrisons that were to be supplied with troops. If it were thought necessary, he was ready to do so; and he was persuaded, that after such a statement, any person who was at all acquainted with the number and extent of our colonial possessions, would acknowledge that the force called for was not greater than the necessity of the case required. Much had been said about the force employed in Canada and the West Indies; but if gentlemen would look to the troops employed in those possessions in 1792, they would find the present increase very trifling indeed, when they compared the extent of territory which we possessed formerly with that which we possess now. This was peculiarly the case with Canada, where population and cultivation had been greatly extended, so that it was necessary to protect a larger line of frontiers.—He would now state the distribution of the military force of this country, and gentlemen would then be enabled to judge

whether it was or was not too great. The infantry of the line consisted of eighty-three regiments. Of these, nine were in Great Britain, twenty-three in Ireland, and fifty-one on foreign stations. Besides the nine regiments of the line in this country, there were dépôts for the fifty-one regiments abroad, where recruits and invalids were received. Taking the nine regiments at home at 740 men each, it gave a total of 6,660 men. Supposing 224 men at each of the fifty one dépôts, the total was 11,424 rank and file. Add to these, six battalions of Foot Guards, 4,400 men; staff corps, 300 men; and the gross total would be 22,784 men. Of these 11,424 were not on actual service. They were in dépôt, and were ready to go abroad when called for. The object in keeping up this part of the establishment was, that the places of non-effective men might be immediately supplied; and by that means, that the regiments abroad should be continued in a perfectly complete and efficient condition. In speaking, therefore, of the force at home, it would be proper to deduct this body of 11,424 men. There were fifty-one regiments abroad, of which twenty were in the West Indies. Now, supposing those regiments thus employed on foreign service to be absent only for ten years, then it became obvious, that there must be sent out from this country annually, seven regiments to foreign stations, while seven others came home from foreign stations. And as one regiment did not quit a foreign station until it was regularly relieved by another, it followed that there were in the course of the year, fourteen regiments neither employed abroad nor in this country, but occupied either with their passage out or home. Taking one station with another, he might say that the reliefs sent out were equal to five regiments, which ought to be deducted from the general establishment for the whole year. If, then, the five regiments thus constantly withdrawn for relief were deducted from nine, it would leave at home, independent of cavalry and of 4,400 guards, a disposable force of only four regiments of the line. He would ask whether this could be considered a greater disposable force than the country ought to possess? If these strong grounds were not sufficient to show the House that the augmentation of last year was necessary, he was very much deceived.

The House then divided. For the amendment 34; Against it 106: Majority 72. The resolutions of the committee of supply were then agreed to.

List of the Minority.

Althorp, visc.	Lamb, hon. G.
Bernal, R.	Lawley, F.
Blake, sir F.	Monck, J. B.
Colborne, N. R.	Ord, W.
Corbett, P.	Poyntz, W. S.
Davies, R. H.	Palmer, C.
Dennison, W. J.	Robinson, sir G.
Dickinson, W.	Robarts, A. W.
Duncannon, visc.	Rickford, W.
Ellice, E.	Tomes, John
Evans, W.	Webbe, E.
Graham, sir S.	Wilson, sir R.
Guise, sir W.	Wood, ald.
Heron, sir R.	Wyvill, M.
Howard, H.	Wharton, John
Honeywood, W. P.	
Ingleby, sir W.	TELLE[RS]
Kemp, T.	Hobhouse, J. C.
Knight, R.	Johnson, colonel

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, March 8.

DEPOSITS WITH THE BANK BILL.] Mr. *Huskisson* said, the House would recollect, that when his right hon. friend, the chancellor of the Exchequer, communicated to them that the Bank had agreed to advance money on goods and merchandise pledged to them as security, he at the same time stated that the Bank had signified an expectation, that the law of Merchant and Factor or rather the alteration of that law, which took place last session, and would not take effect until the 1st of October, would be extended to them. He would therefore move for leave to bring in a bill to effect that object, which was simply to provide that any goods or pledges upon which the Bank advanced money, should be considered as a security to the Bank, notwithstanding any supposed power or control which others might attempt to exercise over them. This was conformable to the alteration in the late law, which declared, that notwithstanding the symbols of property exercised by the owner, goods should be held to be the property of the person in whose possession they were, and that his acts over them should be held binding, in preference to the claims of any other person. When Exchequer-bills were advanced, in 1811, for the relief of the distress then existing, on the same sort of security, a provision to the same effect was introduced, which was, in fact,

a departure from the law of the land as it then stood, and goods pledged under the act were made pledges to which the Crown had a claim in preference to any other lien whatever. He would now move, "That leave be given to bring in a bill, to facilitate the advance of money by the Bank of England upon deposits, or pledges."

Mr. *J. Smith* said, that he approved of the original alteration of the law, and only regretted that it was not carried into effect instantly. It was a mistake to suppose that foreigners entertained any jealousy of the bill.

Mr. *Baring* said, though he regarded this bill as an important improvement in the commercial law of the country, he had objected to it when it was introduced last session, because he saw no reason why it should not have taken effect immediately on its enactment. He knew of no foreigner having objected to it; nor, indeed, did he see upon what ground any foreigner could object to it, since it only assimilated the law of this country in that respect to the law of every civilized country in Europe. He admitted that an unnecessary delay to the operation of this act had been agreed upon; but as the legislature had decreed, that a certain time should elapse before its operation, he did not think it a sound practice to sacrifice a principle to this particular case. The commissioners of 1811 preferred advancing money on personal security, instead of on deposits of goods; and he hoped the Bank would follow that example. He believed the measure adopted by the Bank, under the suggestion of his right hon. friend, had been productive of the greatest good already; and that the manner in which the Bank was acting was deserving of general commendation. That body was taking the best steps, in the most delicate manner, and with as much rapidity as the nature of the case would admit; and he was happy to say, that there was already in London a renewed confidence, and a freedom of commercial intercourse within a few days, which he believed to be wholly attributable to this measure.

Mr. *Bernal* objected to the measure, and considered it a very dangerous precedent.

Mr. *Grenfell* considered the precedent a good one, and he thought the mode adopted much better than an issue of Exchequer-bills.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, that nothing that had been done by ministers had so much met with his approbation, as their determination to refuse an issue of Exchequer-bills.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, March 9.

ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTION.] The Earl of *Darnley*, in rising to present a petition on this subject from a highly respectable body of individuals, said it had been in his hands for some days, and the reason why he had not brought it forward before was, that he saw the attention of parliament directed towards those measures which were introduced for the purpose of alleviating the commercial distress under which the country laboured. He had therefore thought it better to postpone the consideration of it, until the improved circumstances of the country would allow their lordships to give it that attention which the importance of the question deserved. Moreover, he found that parliament had been engaged on another subject, in which a certain portion of the community took a great interest; namely, those measures which were adopted for ameliorating the condition of the slaves. Though he by no means found fault with the ardent zeal which was evinced on behalf of the slaves, yet he must confess that his humanity was not of so excursive a nature, but that he must consider the state of a great proportion of the poor of Ireland quite as interesting as that of the slaves of the West Indies. In fact, the condition of the slaves in those islands was not, in many cases, so bad as the condition of the Irish poor. It was not at present his intention to enter into any discussion on this subject, but he pledged himself to do so on some future occasion. In the mean time, he hoped their lordships would feel as much sympathy for the peasantry of Ireland, as they did for the slaves of the West Indies. It appeared that the prime movers of the petitions in favour of the slaves belonged to a powerful sect, who, by an unnatural alliance with the high church, had contributed more than any other to that unfortunate decision against the Catholics which their lordships had come to in the course of the last session. While they called upon their lordships to precipitate the emancipation of the

negroes, regardless of the consequences, they would at the same time deny emancipation to the Catholics of Ireland, by which alone the safety of that country, and of the empire at large, could be preserved. The more he saw of the state of Ireland, the more was his mind impressed with the decided conviction, that that country could never be tranquil, nor the empire secure, until the just claims of the Catholic body were granted. The petitioners prayed their lordships to restore them to their just rights; but their prayers had been refused under false pretences. And here he must refer to the argument used against them by the noble earl opposite. His speech was, he thought, the most acrimonious, excepting that of a right reverend prelate, he had ever heard. The noble earl had stated, that he would not treat the question as a theological one, but all the noble earl's arguments went to establish what he regarded as a mischievous absurdity in the Roman Catholic faith; namely, divided allegiance. But if their allegiance was divided, what could be more absurd than to give them the command of our fleets and armies, and withhold their civil rights? They, however, utterly disclaimed the imputation. They solemnly declared that they professed allegiance to the king alone, though in the speech of the noble earl they were accused of giving it also to another. This accusation had created among the Catholics a soreness which was very natural, and for which he could by no means blame them. In his opinion, great allowance ought to be made for any acts of indiscretion which they committed, deprived as they were of their civil rights by false pretences. The noble earl ought to read, without delay, a pamphlet addressed to him by that highly-gifted individual Dr. Doyle, written in the spirit of Christian charity. The petition he had to present came from the Catholics of Drogheda, and was signed by 2,500 persons.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that with respect to what was stated in the petition on the subject of divided allegiance, that such a charge amounted to a charge of perjury, he must disclaim ever having made it. The Catholics declared, that in taking the oath of allegiance to his majesty, they disclaimed any divided allegiance, and he was convinced that in swearing allegiance, they swore what they conscientiously believed to be true. But they also acknowledged a spiritual allegiance to the pope; and the real question was, how far that spiritual allegiance was reconcileable with their civil allegiance. That was fair matter of argument. He had already stated his opinion on the question, with the grounds on which it was founded. That opinion was before the House and the public, and he would never shrink from its avowal; but all that he wished now to say was, that in stating it, he did not accuse the Roman Catholics of swearing to any thing which they did not believe to be strictly true.

Ordered to lie on the table.

CORN LAWS.] Lord *King* said, he had another petition to present against the job of jobs. It came from the carpenters and joiners of London, and was signed by 1,400 persons, who stated, that the law which excluded foreign corn greatly injured them, by the manner in which it affected the remuneration of their labour, and he agreed with them in the opinion. Some people were very fond of high prices, high rents, and high wages. By high prices they alleged that every thing was equalized; but in his opinion this sort of equalization did not produce any thing like equity or justice between parties. The great desideratum with the supporters of the Corn laws, was certainly at all times high rents. But how were high rents to be obtained without high prices? The real object, then, was high prices; and high prices were not to be had without the exclusion of foreign corn. But, if you exclude foreign corn, you exclude food. Some people, however, said, that this exclusion of foreign corn created more English food. But it could do so in no other way than by forcing bad land; and if bad land was forced to produce food, it must be at the expense of so much additional labour—of labour far more than equivalent to the value of the food produced. Still, however, some persons said, "If you alter the Corn laws you will do no good, because to lower the price of corn will only be to lower the price of labour with it." But this was a very erroneous opinion; as the present state of things, compared with that when corn was cheap, would show. The price of labour now afforded the labourer only a bare existence, whereas heretofore he got enough, not only for his subsistence, but for comforts. It was certainly true that if corn were cheap, the money price

of labour would fall; but the real remuneration of labour would increase. He should think that abundance and cheapness of food would be regarded as a great blessing to any country, and one which a wise and benevolent legislature would be desirous to confer. This he should expect now; whatever might have been done in those dark times of legislation, when parliament thought fit to declare that paper and gold were of equal value.

The Earl of *Carnarvon* said, he was for a free trade in corn as well as in every thing else, but did not think that the question was one which should be discussed in the present state of the country. The noble lord went into arguments which others were not prepared to answer, and which, if they were, ought not to be discussed at that time. He could not acquiesce in the term "job" given to an act of parliament, which had not been adopted until after the most serious consideration. The measure was introduced in one session, and was not adopted until the next. Parliament might have erred, but if there was error, it was not intentional. If, upon due consideration, it should be found that the Corn laws were not consistent with the general interest, parliament would doubtless alter them. His wish was, that the agriculturist and the manufacturer should be placed on an equal footing, and that the Corn laws should form no impediment in the way of free trade. But his noble friend should consider what had been the effect produced by the Bank Restriction act, the operation of which had lasted for twenty-five years. After the operation of that act had brought into cultivation land which was never before cultivated, and had also brought into existence an immense agricultural population, which would be thrown out of employ by the discontinuance of that cultivation, he did not think that their lordships could suddenly rid themselves of all the consequences of that measure, without producing in every part of the country, greater distress than could be experienced by the journeymen carpenters of London; who he believed were as well off as most workmen. He made these observations, to show that it was not the landlords who were altogether to blame with respect to the Corn laws. The present was a period of commercial distress; but it should be recollected, that there had also been a time of agricultural distress. But at that time did not persons in trade also suffer? Did they not complain that the home market failed them? This showed how closely the interests of all parties were bound up together, and that the present question was one of difficult solution. It was understood, however, that, if not in this, their lordships would in the next session be called upon for a decision. There was therefore no reason for anticipating the discussion. Instead of using the word "job," he should wish his noble friend to avoid all harsh language on the subject, and allow it to be calmly considered. The course his noble friend pursued could only tend to produce angry feelings.

The Earl of *Darnley* said, he did not rise in the expectation of correcting the vicious propensity of his noble friend who presented the petition, the only effect of whose language, in returning again and again to the same subject, must be to create discontent; which he knew could not be the intention of his noble friend. With regard to his own opinion on the Corn laws, it was a mistake to suppose that he had decided against any alteration. If, however, parliament should withdraw all protection from agriculture, he did not think that such an alteration would be advantageous to the labourer; for if bread became cheap, labour would be cheap also. The question, in fact, was not one of high rents, but whether this country, involved in great domestic and financial difficulties, could compete on the same terms with countries experiencing no such embarrassments. He had thought it necessary to say this much, but hoped he should not be again provoked to notice the subject, until it came regularly under the consideration of the House.

Lord *King* did not doubt but he should have occasion to provoke his noble friend again and again on this subject, if he was determined to be provoked every time a petition was presented. It was singular enough, however, that his two noble friends took such different views of his conduct. The one thought that he took the House by surprise with his arguments, the other that he used the same arguments too often. Nevertheless they both agreed in wishing him to discontinue his practice of addressing the House. It was certainly kind of his two noble friends to favour him with so much of their advice. He had indeed, got a great deal of advice of late; but he could not help thinking that there was occasionally something in the nature of it, that rendered it rather suspicious. He had been entreated, both in prose and

verse, to cease his exertions. The two noble friends were not only prodigal of their advice to him, but equally ready to give it to the labourers. The effect of their advice was—"Do not trust to those who wish to make corn plenty and cheap, but to us who will make it dear and give you little of it."

Ordered to lie on the table.

STATE OF THE CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT IN THE SOUTH OF IRELAND.] The Earl of *Kingston* rose to bring forward the motion of which he had given notice. He had hoped, he said, that the subject would have been taken up by some one better qualified for the task than he was; and indeed he wished it had been brought before their lordships by one of the learned prelates, to whose province it more particularly belonged. From the reports upon their lordships' table, it appeared, that a vast number of unions of parishes had taken place in the province of Munster, not such unions as that of seven religious houses in the city of Cork, which altogether did not extend over half a mile; but of large parishes, extending over a distance of fifteen miles. In that large union, there was only one church, and that one church had been built by a private individual, the ancestor of the present lord Massey. In the province of Munster, their lordships would find instances of six, seven, and eight parishes united together, with but one church amongst them all. Now, it was impossible to expect people to remain of the Protestant religion in a place where they had no church to attend, and where they could not even procure the attendance of a clergyman in cases of emergency. He had been told, that no curate had been seen in the parish of Kilbennie for several years, and that the inhabitants were therefore obliged, when they required the performance of any religious office, to send to the rector of another parish five or six miles off. He did not mean, by making these observations, to say any thing disrespectful of the clergy. Undoubtedly, they had done much. Many churches had been built, but they had not funds to build all that were necessary. In moving, therefore, for a commitee to consider the present state of the church in Munster, he was rather addressing himself to his majesty's ministers, in the hope of inducing them to furnish the clergy with the means of building churches, and perpetuating the established religion. The piety and zeal of the Roman Catholic clergymen in that part of the country were truly praiseworthy. They attended their flocks with the most exemplary attention; while the Protestant inhabitants had no person to attend to their spiritual wants. The noble earl, after referring to the reports before the House, for the number of unions in the dioceses of Cashel and Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe, concluded by moving for a committee to inquire into the state of the Protestant church in Munster. In Ulster, he said, there was a church in every parish.

The Earl of *Harrowby* thought the noble earl had not laid before the House sufficient grounds to induce them to accede to his motion. He had moved for a committee, while the very papers which he held in his hands would, if examined, have afforded an answer thereto. There could be little doubt, that in some cases these unions of parishes had been a great evil; but he did not think that observation could be properly made of those unions which had been effected under episcopal authority, and which must, therefore, be supposed to have been made on good consideration. It was said, that many of these unions were without a single church, and blame had been attributed to the government on that account. Now, the fact was, that the government were not at all insensible to the evils of which the noble earl had complained. That they were not insensible to these evils, might be proved by the single fact, that in the twenty years preceding 1822, 175 churches had been built in the province of Munster, and 122 glebe houses had been given. In the particular case to which the noble earl had alluded, the vicar was not resident, but the curate had always attended. These returns contained all the information that the noble earl could acquire, even if the committee were granted; and for himself he must say, that he thought the granting of a committee would be casting an undeserved slur on the dignitaries of the church of Ireland.

The Bishop of *Ferns* thought himself bound, as the clerical representative of that part of the kingdom, to say a few words on this subject. He should call on the House to exercise all their indulgence towards him, for he was not much accustomed to addressing public bodies on any subject, and on this subject par-

ticularly he was unprepared. He had none of his Irish brethren to assist him, and the notice of motion had been too short to enable him to send to Ireland for information. Returns of unions, and of their dissolution, and the time when such dissolution took place, had been made, and every information had been afforded, except that which might be expected from the proceeding now going on in Ireland. The noble earl opposite had referred to the extent of these unions, but their extent alone did not furnish any satisfactory evidence of the difficulty or facility of the performance of clerical duties. One parish, he knew, was several miles in length, and three quarters of a mile in breadth, and the difficulty there arose not so much from its extent as its form. There was another parish, of which he had given up the tithes for building a church, and that parish although very small, possessed a greater number of parishioners than some which were much larger. The evil did not lie where the noble earl seemed to imagine, and the true remedy was, not to dissolve the parish unions, but to erect chapels of ease, for the accommodation of those who were at a distance from the church. The fact was, it was only by means of these unions that the rectors could be able to receive any payment; for although these unions covered a great extent of ground, it was seldom they had many inhabitants. The rectors at present, so far from being overpaid, were actually very poor. Many of these unions were so poor, as to leave nothing to pay the rector after he had discharged the claims of his curates. The rector of Wexford had three curates, and their pay, although moderate, swallowed up nearly the whole revenue of the parish. There were seven episcopal unions in Cashel, and in none were there more than two parishes. In Emly there were only two unions. He had once applied to the board of First Fruits to erect an additional church in Leitrim, in which there were five hundred parishioners, who complained that they were too distant from the church; but the application was refused, on the ground of want of funds; and in another case, where he had been applied to, he had felt himself bound to require, before he interfered, a description of the form of the parish, as well as of the number of its inhabitants. After some observations, his lordship concluded by expressing his conviction that the survey at present going on in Ireland would furnish his majesty's government with the best information as to what measures they ought to adopt with regard to this subject.

The Earl of *Kingston* insisted that he had made out a case to justify his motion, and that the circumstances stated by the right rev. prelate proved it. He knew a district in the South of Ireland, through which one might travel along the high road for a distance of twenty-two miles without seeing a single church. Although, however, he was satisfied that he had fully made out a case, yet as his object in bringing forward his motion was to point the attention of the learned prelates to the subject, he was willing to abstain from pressing it.—His lordship accordingly withdrew his motion.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, March 9.

SCOTCH REPRESENTATION.] Mr. *Abercromby* rose to present a petition, signed by between seven and eight thousand resident householders of Edinburgh, complaining of what was most unjustly called the representation of that city. He had presented petitions of the same nature for several sessions; and each year added strength to the complaints of the petitioners. It was a peculiar fact, that six persons belonging to the town council, which enjoyed the monopoly of appointing the representatives of Edinburgh, had signed the present petition. In so doing, they had afforded an incontestable proof that their sympathy with the great mass of the inhabitants of the city, was much greater than their sympathy with the small body constituting the corporation; and none could be better qualified to form a judgment on this subject, than they who were aware of what passed within the precincts of the select few, by whom the choice of representatives was made. On the first occasion when he presented this petition, he had presented it in the firm conviction that it was founded in truth and justice; and nothing had since occurred to alter that conviction. He had likewise presented it, because he believed that the citizens of Edinburgh would prosecute it with prudence, firmness, and perseverance: in that expectation, too, he had not been disappointed. He had also presented it, because he was convinced, not only that it would be prudent and just for the House to grant the reform which

the petitioners asked, but also that it would consolidate and strengthen all that was really good and valuable in the constitution. By widening its basis, they would give additional strength and firmness to the superstructure reared upon it. In conclusion, the hon. member gave notice, that he would hereafter fix a day upon which he would bring the state of the representation in Edinburgh under the notice and consideration of the House.

Sir *G. Clerk* said, that as the hon. and learned member had given notice of his intention of fixing a day for the discussion of the representative system of Scotland, he should not follow him at present into the remarks which he had made upon that subject. He should only say, that he was sorry that the learned gentleman had not presented his petition, when the representative for Edinburgh was in the House, as he could have gone more ably into the subject than he himself could do. There was, however, nothing peculiar in the representation of Edinburgh which required a particular law to cure and remedy it. The House had no more right to take away the exclusive right of election from the corporation of Edinburgh, than it had to take it away from the corporations of Bath and Portsmouth, which equally enjoyed it. Such rights were never taken away from any parties by the House, unless it was shown that they had been guilty of gross corruption in the exercise of them.

Mr. *Hume* observed, that the hon. member had argued as if the existence of an abuse in one country was a sufficient excuse for the existence of another abuse in another country. He trusted that the House would take the state of the representation of Edinburgh into its immediate consideration, as nothing could be more disgraceful and unfair. The representative for that town was returned by thirty-three individuals, and not by the great mass of the property and respectability of the town. The consequence of this was, that almost every man's property in Edinburgh was disposed of, without his consent or knowledge. The government, which was making wholesome reforms in many of our institutions, could not do better than make a reform here; for no where could it be more salutary. He should be happy to see a perfect system of representation established. The interest and the honour of the country both required it, and the minister who carried such a system into effect would deserve and obtain a glorious immortality.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, that when he brought in the bill of which he had given notice, he should expect to meet with strenuous opposition from the hon. baronet. That hon. baronet was intimately connected with those who supported the system of which he complained. He now gave notice that he would, on the 13th of April, ask for leave to bring in a bill to amend and alter the representation of Edinburgh.

Sir *R. Fergusson* said, he would support the bill whenever it came before the House. The system of Scotch representation, both in boroughs and counties, was highly disgraceful, and required immediate reform.

Ordered to lie on the table.

CORN LAWS.] Mr. *Hume* presented a petition from the working manufacturers of Gorbals and other places, in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, praying for an alteration in the Corn laws. The hon. member observed, that although he considered the high price of corn to be almost as prejudicial to the farmer as to the manufacturer, he was not inclined to throw the ports entirely open at once. Whatever was done must be done gradually; but unless something was done, it would be impossible for the manufacturing labourers of the country to obtain subsistence for their families, at the present low rate of wages.

Mr. *Curwen* said, that if permission were given to import corn into this country without restriction, the result of it would be visible in a few years, in the production of a famine.

Mr. *Sumner* complained of the interlocutory mode of discussing so important a subject, which had recently been adopted in both Houses of Parliament. He thought that the petitioners had no right to complain at present of the high price of corn. Their language appeared to him very like the language of rebellion. No other construction could properly be put upon the phrase, that the bonds of society must be broken, if the Corn laws continued much longer in operation.

Mr. *Bernal* thought that no such construction could be put upon the petition in common fairness. It might be that the language of the petitioners was strong; but it ought to be recollected, that they were not gifted with that temper, patience,

and nice discrimination, which were the attributes of the hon. member for Surrey. At that moment the price of meat, bread, cheese, and butter, was excessive. Now, the manufacturers were receiving low wages; and, with low wages, it was impossible for them to obtain the articles of food which he had just mentioned. These were plain truths, which sooner or later must force themselves on the attention of parliament.

Mr. *Maberly* was surprised that petitions like the present had not been received from every manufacturing district in the country. He was, however, not surprised at the language of the petitioners. All he was astonished at was, that similar petitions were not poured in from every manufacturing district in the country.

Mr. *Benett* condemned severely the tone of the petition, and he could only understand from it, that a threat was intended by the expression of breaking down the bonds of society. The petitioners were much deceived, if they expected that the distresses, under which they were now suffering, would be alleviated by the repeal of the Corn-laws. Whenever those laws were repealed, that repeal would be followed by a great diminution in the demand for their labour.

Mr. *Hume* protested against the assumption that the petition contained any improper language, still less any thing which could be construed into a threat. He would be the last person to justify the use of improper language; but he thought that nothing ought to deter members from presenting petitions which contained perhaps a warm, but nevertheless an honest statement of the effect which the grievances they endured had produced on their minds. He thought that no time could be called improper for such a purpose.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* said, he could not think that any advantage could be gained by discussions like the present, which agitated a subject confessed to be one of the utmost importance, difficulty, and delicacy. He was sure that no person in that House, wished to repress the voice of the people on any subject. The hon. gentleman thought the petition which he had presented was a specimen of fine writing; but even he thought that they had painted their distresses a little too highly. Without its being supposed that he wished to prevent any representation of the distresses of the people, he must be permitted to deprecate a discussion, which could in no way tend to throw a light upon the subject, but which was calculated to produce asperity between classes which it was most desirable to conciliate. A discussion, if any should take place, ought to be temperate and dispassionate, and, above all, bitterness and asperity of language ought to be avoided.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, that however desirable it might be thought by the hon. gentleman to avoid discussions on these subjects, it was obviously impossible to do so; and, indeed, when it was considered that upon these occasions alone the House had an opportunity of hearing the sentiments of gentlemen who did not take any other part in the debates, it might be doubted whether it was advisable to discourage such discussions. At least they gave the country an opportunity of knowing the sentiments of members on this subject, and of ascertaining who did and who did not approve of any alteration in the law as it stood. If any evil consequences had been felt, they must be attributed solely to his majesty's ministers', and to the delay which they had occasioned in the settlement of this important question. He had understood that it was to be brought on in the course of the present session, and that the right hon. the president of the Board of Trade was to have submitted to the House his views on the subject. Ministers might have grounds for the alteration which they contemplated. He believed they were mistaken; but as the question must be decided, he thought the postponement of the discussion was extremely objectionable. At the ensuing general election, gentlemen would be called on, in almost every place, to state their opinions on this subject; and unless they knew what were the intentions of ministers, it would be impossible for them satisfactorily to answer. If the country could but once know what the government proposed to do, there would be an end of all discussion; but while they abstained from stating that, the uncertainty produced the greatest inconvenience. It was not, to be sure, difficult to guess from their measures what they intended to do. He had no doubt that the right hon. gentleman meant to approximate the laws relating to corn as much as possible to those which he had established on other subjects — that he would place a protecting duty on corn,

and then leave its importation, subject to that duty, unrestricted. But the question was, what was the amount of that duty to be? Why should this be concealed? There had been too many proofs that the people were to be reasoned out of their erroneous opinions, to doubt, that, upon a fair statement of the advantages to be derived from a change of the system with regard to corn, they would readily concur in it. Why, then, should it be left in mystery? Why should the people be left, in consequence of their ignorance on this subject, to present petitions to the House, drawn up by nobody knew whom, and the statements in which were inflamed by their own fears and the advice of improper persons? If the House would be firm, resolute, and consistent, all the difficulties would vanish. The people might be assured that the rate of their wages had nothing whatever to do with the price of corn. He hoped that corn would be cheaper; and if there were plentiful crops, that would of necessity be the case; but it would be in vain to look to any other cause than the bounty of Providence for producing that effect.

Mr. *Peel* explained, that he had no wish to repress a discussion on the subject of the Corn-laws, if any argument was to be offered to the House; but when he had heard the petitioners using the terms "relentless obduracy," he had been apprehensive that a debate might arise, the tendency of which would be to produce irritation, without throwing any light on the subject which had occasioned it. With respect to the sentiments of the government on this question, he hoped the hon. gentleman would himself admit, that as a time had been fixed for its discussion, ministers would do better to reserve themselves, than to embrace the opportunity which was now offered, by the figurative petition from Gorbals.

Lord *John Russell* agreed, that it would be advisable to have the question of the Corn-laws settled as soon as might be practicable; but since a delay had taken place, he hoped ministers would avail themselves of it to consider the nature and extent of the burthens which at present attached to the land. Before any alteration could be effected in the nature of the Corn-laws, those burthens must be alleviated, and the agriculturists brought upon the same footing with respect to the demands as the manufacturing classes.

Ordered to lie on the table.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE CRIMINAL LAWS.] Mr. *Secretary Peel* rose, and said:*

Mr. Speaker; I hope, Sir, that the House is prepared to give me its attention, whilst I explain the object of those measures connected with the Criminal Law which I am about to submit to its consideration. To many, I fear, this subject may appear barren and uninviting. It can borrow no excitement from political feelings, nor can it awaken the hopes or fears of conflicting parties; but it involves higher interests, it concerns the security of property—the prevention of crime—the moral habits of the people—and it prefers, therefore, a just and imperative demand on the serious attention of parliament.

I claim that attention on another ground. Of all the subjects which fall within the range of our deliberations, none perhaps has been more neglected than the Criminal Law. "Inter arma silent leges," is a trite remark applied to periods of civil dissention. I fear that it might with equal justice be said that amidst the excitement of party conflicts, the true principles which should regulate the Criminal jurisprudence of the country have been too frequently disregarded. I conjure the House, therefore, by these high considerations, by the paramount importance of the subject, and by the reparation which is due for past neglect, now to entertain with favour and attention, a proposal for the simplification and amendment of some important branches of the law.

The two measures which I mean to submit to the House, are a bill for the consolidation of the Statute-law of England, relating to the crime of theft. And a bill to improve the administration of justice in some particulars, which I will hereafter specify.

And first, with respect to the bill for the consolidation of the law relating to theft. I presume that I shall not have to combat at the outset any objections to the principle of an attempt to consolidate and simplify the criminal law. It appears so conformable to the dictates of common sense, that the law, of which all men are supposed to have cognizance—and which all are bound under heavy penalties to obey, should be as precise and intelligible

* From the original edition, printed for Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly.

as it can be made—that it is almost needless to fortify by reasoning or authority, the first impressions of the understanding.

If authority were required, I could cite some of the most illustrious names that have adorned the civil and judicial annals of this country, the names of lawyers and of statesmen, who have either expressed a decided opinion in favour of the attempt to simplify the law, or who have been actually engaged in the undertaking. To one of these, the first in point of antiquity, as the first in weight and esteem, I will refer, and thus preclude the necessity of summoning other less important testimony. The lord chancellor Bacon submitted to king James 1st a proposal for amending the laws of England. In that treatise, short as it is, is comprised every argument that can be cited in favour of the measure of which I am speaking, every objection is foreseen, and satisfactorily confuted. The lapse of two hundred and fifty years has increased the necessity of the measure which lord Bacon then proposed, but it has produced no argument in favour of the principle, no objection averse to it, which, to use the words of Cowley applied to Bacon himself, "from the mountain-top of his exalted wit," he did not anticipate.

The House will allow me to substitute for my own imperfect expressions the emphatic terms in which lord Bacon has recorded the suggestions of a mighty intellect. In addressing his sovereign, he says, that his object is not to tax the laws, "I speak," says he, "only by way of perfecting them, which is easiest in the best things; for that which is far amiss hardly receiveth amendment, but that which hath already, to that more may be given." "Besides, what I shall propound, is not to the matter of the laws, but to the manner of their registry, expression, and tradition: so that it giveth them rather new light than any new nature."

He proceeds to state, that for the safety and convenience of the proposal which he makes, "it is good to consider and answer those objections or scruples which may arise or be made against this work." Objection the first, "That it is a thing needless; and that the law as it now is, is in a good estate comparable to any foreign law; and that it is not possible for the wit of man in respect of the frailty thereof, to provide against the uncertainties and evasions or omissions of law." The following is the answer of lord Bacon: "For the comparison with foreign laws, it is in vain to speak of it, for men will never agree about it. Our lawyers will maintain for our municipal laws——civilians, scholars, travellers will be of the other opinion."

But, Sir, I must interrupt my reference to lord Bacon by remarking that the lapse of years has supplied us with an answer to the first part of this objection which lord Bacon had not to urge. Foreign nations have condensed and simplified their laws—and have disentitled us to vindicate the confusion or uncertainty of our own statutes, by the boast (weak and fruitless as an argument, if it were well founded) that those statutes are less confused and less uncertain than the ordinances of other states.

"Certain it is," says lord Bacon, "that our laws as they now stand, are subject to great uncertainties, and variety of opinion, delays and evasion." "Mark," he observes, "whether the doubts that arise are only in cases not in ordinary experience, or in cases which happen every day. If in the first only, impute it to the frailty of man's foresight, that cannot reach by law to all cases; but if in the latter, be assured there is a fault in the law."—"There is an inconvenience of penal laws obsolete and out of use: for that it brings a gangrene, neglect, and habit of disobedience upon other wholesome laws that are fit to be continued in practice and execution; so that our laws endure the torment of Mazentius. The living die in the arms of the dead."

The second objection foreseen by lord Bacon is this:—"That it is a great innovation, and innovations are dangerous beyond foresight." He replies, "All purgings and medicines, either in the civil or natural body, are innovations, so as that argument is a common-place against all noble reformations. But the truth is, that this work ought not to be termed or held for any innovation in the suspected sense." "Besides it is on the favourable part, it easeth, it presseth not, and lastly, it is rather a matter of order and explanation than of alteration."

Another objection stated by lord Bacon, and that which is perhaps most frequently urged at present, is this: "That it will turn the judges, counsellors of law, and students of law, to school again, and make them to seek what they shall hold and advise for law; and it will

impose a new charge upon all lawyers, to furnish themselves with new books of law." The reply is: "For the former of these, touching the new labour, it is true it would follow, if the law (the common law) were new moulded into a text law, for then men must be new to begin, and that is one of the reasons for which I disavow that course. But in the way that I now propound, the entire body and substance of law shall remain, only discharged of idle and unprofitable or hurtful matter, and illustrated by order and other helps towards the better understanding of it and judgment thereupon. For the latter—touching the new charge of books, it is not worthy the speaking of in a matter of so high importance—it might have been used of the new translation of the bible and like works."

Lord Bacon adds this brief sentence pregnant with a truth too often disregarded—a truth of everlasting and universal application. "Books should follow sciences, and not sciences books."

Having urged these reasons for the simplification of the Statute-law, he lays down the principles upon which it should be conducted. "For the reforming and recompiling of the Statute-law it consisteth of four parts." The first, "To discharge the books of those statutes, where the case by alteration of time is vanished; as Lombards, Jews, Gauls, Half-pence, &c. Those may nevertheless remain in the libraries of antiquities, but no reprinting of them; the like of statutes long since expired and clearly repealed. The next is, to repeal all statutes which are sleeping and not of use, but yet snaring and in force; in some of these it will perhaps be requisite to substitute some more reasonable law, instead of them, agreeable to the time; in others a simple repeal may suffice. The third, that the grievousness of the penalty in many statutes be mitigated, though the ordinance stands. The last is, the reducing of concurrent statutes heaped one upon another, to one clear and uniform law."

Such, Mr. Speaker, are the reasons upon which I have undertaken the measure I shall propose, and such the principles by which I have guided myself in the preparation of it. May I not add in the concluding words of lord Bacon, "this is the best way to accomplish this excellent work; of honour to your majesty's times, and of good to all times." If, Sir, there be any to whom the authority of lord Bacon may appear of too remote an antiquity, or who may consider his views too philosophic and abstract, I will for their satisfaction produce another authority more recent, and more practical—the authority of a committee of the House of Commons.

In the year 1796, a committee was appointed to inspect and consider all the temporary laws then about to expire. The chairman of that committee was the present lord Colchester, and to him we are indebted on this, as on many other subjects, for one of the ablest reports that can be found on the Journals of the House of Commons. That report observes, "that a general revision of the Statute-law appears to have been often recommended from the throne—to have been petitioned for by both Houses of parliament—to have engaged the labours of successive committees, and to have been undertaken by individuals under the sanction of royal and parliamentary authority, but never to have been carried forward to any degree of maturity. After the Restoration, Finch, Solicitor-general (afterwards lord Nottingham, and lord Chancellor), serjeant Maynard, Mr. Robert Atkyns, Mr. Prynne, and others, were appointed in 1666, to be a committee, to consider of repealing such Statute-laws as they shall find necessary to be repealed, and of reducing all Statute-laws of one nature, under such a method and head as may conduce to the more ready understanding and execution of such laws. This seems to be the last recorded instance of this sort. And thus it is," says the report, "that parliament has hitherto failed to accomplish this general revision; and has now suffered it to sleep for more than a century, although the delay of it has annually augmented its necessity."

Now, Sir, what I propose is, to break this sleep of a century; of more than a century indeed, for thirty years have passed away since the report of 1796, and each successive year has added its own heavy incumbrances to the Statute-book. I shall, Sir, with the leave of the House present a bill uniting into one statute all the enactments that exist, and are fit to be retained, relating to the crime of theft, and to offences immediately connected with theft, such, for instance, as the receiving of stolen property.

I select the laws relating to theft in the first instance, because I consider the crime of theft to constitute the most important

class of crime. There are acts no doubt of much greater malignity, of a much more atrocious character than the simple act of robbery; but looking to the committals and convictions for crime, it will at once be seen, that those for theft so far exceed the committals and convictions for any other species of offence, that there can be no question of its paramount importance in the catalogue of offences against society, and that, if the laws relating to this class of offence can be simplified and united into one statute, we shall have made a most material advance towards the revision of our criminal Statute-law.

By a reference to the criminal returns for England and Wales it will be found that in the last year, the year 1825, 14,437 persons were charged with various crimes; of this number not less than 12,500 persons, amounting to six-sevenths of the whole number, were charged with the crime of theft. There were charged with burglary 428, cattle-stealing 42, horse-stealing 229, stealing in a dwelling-house to the value of forty shillings 265, from the person 835, robbery on the person on the highway and other places 189, sheep-stealing 166, simple larceny 10,087. If any other offence be taken it will be seen that the numbers charged with that offence bear a very trifling proportion to the numbers charged with theft.

In 1825, the same year in which 12,500 persons were charged with theft, were committed, for the crime of arson 22, for murder 94, for manslaughter 122. If a longer period be taken the result will be nearly the same.

In the last seven years there have been, convictions for forgery 331, for murder 121, for perjury 43, for arson 50, while, for simple larceny alone, there have been in the same period not less than 43,000 convictions. I need say no more to demonstrate the immense importance of the crime of theft, considered as a class of crime, and to shew the necessity of establishing, with regard to it, as clear and intelligible a law as it is possible to establish.

The number of the statutes at present in force relating to this offence amounts to about ninety-two—they include a period of time extending from the reign of Henry 3rd, from the statute called the Charta Forestæ, passed in the ninth year of that king's reign, to the last year of all, the sixth of his present majesty. The number of these laws, the remote and various periods at which they have passed, will probably create an apprehension that the attempt to simplify their language, to classify their provisions, and to condense them into one statute is a hopeless undertaking. But, Sir, I hold in my hand the visible proof that the undertaking is not hopeless. Here is the draft of a bill which has been printed for the purpose of facilitating the consideration of its details previously to its introduction, and in the short compass of thirty pages, without making any rash experiment to curtail the phraseology of the existing laws, without the omission, I believe, of a single clause, which it is fitting to retain, are included all the provisions of the statute law relating to the offence of larceny.

This reduction of the bulk of the law, has been effected by selecting in some instances from an heterogeneous mass of legislation heaped together in one statute upon matters perfectly unconnected and dissimilar, those enactments that relate to the protection of property from theft, and in other instances by extracting from various statutes which have been passed in particular cases, the principle upon which each was founded, substituting in lieu of various scattered enactments, giving protection to individual articles of property, one general enactment, affording protection to the class of property to which those individual articles belong.

It is clear that criminal legislation has been heretofore left to the desultory and unconcerted speculations of every man who had a fancy to legislate. If an offence were committed in some corner of the land, a law sprung up to prevent the repetition, not of the species of crime to which it belonged, but of the single and specific act of which there had been reason to complain. The new enactment too was frequently stuck into the middle of a statute passed probably at the latter end of a session; to the compounding of which, every man who saw or imagined a defect in the pre-existing law, was allowed to contribute.

To give an instance or two of legislation of this kind: Some member has been injured, or he has a constituent who has been injured by the stealing of madder roots, and a provision is forthwith made for the special protection for the future, of madder roots, not by a single statute, but by including the enactments directed against the stealer of madder roots, in a law of which the following is the comprehensive title:

"An Act to continue several laws therein mentioned for granting liberty to carry sugars of the growth, produce, or manufacture of any of his majesty's sugar colonies in America, from the said colonies directly into foreign ports, in ships built in Great Britain, and navigated according to law; for the preventing the committing of frauds by bankrupts; for giving further encouragement for the importation of naval stores from the British colonies in America; and for preventing frauds and abuses in the admeasurement of coals in the city and liberty of Westminster: *and for preventing the stealing or destroying of madder roots.*"

I will mention another instance of the same kind. There are not less than twenty statutes relating to the preservation of trees from theft or wilful injury, some properly confined to trees alone, others relating to matters so utterly unconnected with the protection of timber, or with the crime of theft, that I shall be almost suspected of fabricating the title of a bill for the purpose of my argument. It seems to have been discovered about fity or sixty years since that the various laws which had previously passed with respect to timber, did not afford sufficient protection to hollies, thorns, and quicksets, and to save the trouble of amending the former laws—these neglected shrubs were provided for in an act, which, in taking charge of them, took charge also of the other matters referred to in the following title.

"An Act for the better securing the duties of customs upon certain goods removed from the outports and other places to London; for regulating the fees of his majesty's customs in the province of Senegambia in Africa; for allowing to the receivers general of the duties on offices and employments in Scotland a proper compensation; *for the better preservation of hollies, thorns, and quicksets in forests, chases, and private grounds, and of trees and underwoods in forests and chases*; and for authorizing the exportation of a limited quantity of an inferior sort of barley called bigg from the port of Kirkwall in the island of Orkney."

Now, Sir, what I propose is, not to lessen the security which the law gives to the owner of madder roots, not to throw open the holly or thorn to wanton depredation, but merely to transplant them to a more congenial soil than the province of Senegambia.

The laws relating to trees are fruitful in instances of hasty and slovenly legislation. For instance, there passed in the 6th Geo. 3rd, two statutes for the protection of certain trees and vegetable productions in gardens, the 36th and 48th chapters, which must have passed almost concurrently. Neither of them refer to the host of antecedent statutes, and the author of chapter 48, must have been unapprized of the labours of him who had introduced and probably was superintending at the time the progress of chapter 36; for offences which by that act are made a felony, are by chapter 48 punishable only with a fine of twenty pounds. Had the latter statute passed in a succeeding session of parliament, it would have amounted to a virtual repeal of the preceding act. There are no less than three separate acts of parliament extending the provisions of chapter 48 to particular species of trees.

I will proceed to explain the material points in which I propose either to simplify and consolidate the law, or in which I propose to remedy, what appear to be glaring defects in the law; for my undertaking is not limited merely to the condensation of the statutes. Where I find any omission through which notorious guilt escapes, I propose to supply it — where I find a just principle at present only partially applied, I propose to extend it to all the cases which it ought to include. I trust the House will bear with me in this reference to details, because details are here of the utmost importance.

There are on the Statute-book, twelve statutes relating to the offence of stolen goods. They are so numerous, because they are founded not upon some definite principle, but because they refer to individual articles of property. One statute punishes the receiver of stolen lead, iron, copper, brass, and bell metal. Then follows a statute to punish the receiver of stolen pewter. Another refers to jewels, plate, and watches. Then comes the general act as to all goods and chattels—but even this was not considered general enough to apply to bank notes and negotiable securities, and therefore an act was passed in the present reign for their special protection. Now, I shall expunge from the Statute-book all these special provisions, and substitute in lieu of this legislation directed to particulars, one simple and general enactment, founded on this plain principle, that he who receives, knowing it to have been stolen,

any thing whatever, the stealing of which amounts by law to a felony, shall himself be deemed guilty of felony.

Surely this is the enactment which common sense suggests as the fit enactment against the wilful receiver of stolen property, whether that property be lead or pewter, jewels or bank notes. The example to which I have last referred will sufficiently explain the mode in which I have attempted to proceed in simplifying and compressing the law, in all other cases of a similar nature.

I come now to a subject of at least equal importance. The supplying of those omissions in the law which insure the impunity of guilt. Of those omissions I will give some examples. Under the law as it stands at present, it has been decided that it is not an offence, at least not an offence in the eye of the law, to rob a ready-furnished house, notwithstanding that it is a very serious offence to rob a ready-furnished lodging. It is upon record, that after the conviction of a man who robbed of some articles of plate the house which he had hired, the sentence was respited upon a doubt whether the case were within the statute which uses the word lodging and not lodging-house. It was agreed by all the judges that the case was not within the statute, and chief baron M'Donald ordered the prisoner to be discharged, saying, "I am sorry the laws of England have not provided for your case, for I have no doubt whatever of your guilt."

Again, the statute which makes it an offence to steal or destroy fish in streams, expressly refers to such streams as pass in or through an estate. If therefore the stream, as is frequently the case, neither passes in nor through an estate, but passes between two estates, being the boundary to each, the owner of the fish forfeits his protection under the statute.

Can any man doubt that these are examples of imperfection and omission in the law, which can and ought to be supplied?

Can any man doubt that it is expedient to extend, as I propose to extend, the protection which the law at present gives to securities for property in the British funds, to securities for property in the funds of foreign states, and to mercantile instruments of all kinds, entitling the holder to the payment of money abroad? Is it fitting that these securities and instruments should be liable to be stolen with impunity? Is it fitting that the stealing of a handkerchief should subject to transportation, and that the stealing of title-deeds, that the stealing of a will on which the property and existence of whole families may depend, should remain altogether exempt from penalty?

The law with respect to a very frequent and very aggravated offence, the embezzlement by servants of their masters property, is at present very defective.

Among the principal defects are these:

It is necessary to state in the indictment, and to prove in evidence, the embezzlement of specific monies, not merely of the sum in the gross of which, the master may have been defrauded but of the particular coin or notes of which that sum consisted, which may have entirely escaped the recollection of the master.

Again, if the servant has defrauded his master by the means of receiving change, he cannot be convicted at all. Supposing, for instance, the servant having 10*s.* to receive for his master, gives 10*s.* to the party from whom the money is due, and receives a one-pound note, which he embezzles, he commits no offence against the law. He cannot be convicted of embezzling the note, for that was not the property of his master, nor can he be convicted of embezzling shillings, for he has received none.

The main defect in the law is this: the offence is at present a felony; now by the rules of law each act of embezzlement is considered a distinct felony, and only one distinct felony is admitted to be proved upon an indictment for felony. The prosecution therefore often fails from the impossibility of laying the whole case, the whole tissue of fraud, before the jury. The proof being confined to a single act of embezzlement, the jury leans, not unreasonably, to mercy, and frequently chooses to presume that the single act of embezzlement may have arisen from mistake, rather than to convict for the felony.

I propose to remedy these defects; to admit proof that various sums have been received and misapplied by a prisoner, without requiring proof as to the specific coin or bills of which those sums consisted. I propose to alter the legal designation and character of the crime of embezzlement, to make it a misdemeanor instead of a felony, and thus to admit the proof of that which may be absolutely necessary to enable the jury to determine the

real extent of the prisoner's guilt, namely, of the whole series of embezzlement, in which he may have been engaged.

In the course of the observations which I have made, several cases have been mentioned in which I propose to subject to penalties, acts which at present may be committed with impunity.

But I beg to observe, first, that these acts, are in every instance acts of great moral guilt, which only escape at present through the imperfection of the law; and, secondly, that the new penalties which I affix, amount in no case whatever to death; I constitute no new capital felony.

I propose to extend the grasp of the law; but in no instance do I increase, in some I mitigate, its severity.

I will mention two important examples of the abatement of penalty.

The law which makes it an offence punishable with death, to steal in a dwelling-house to the amount of 40*s.* extends at present to all out-houses within the curtilage, as it is called.

It is intended to except for the future from the operation of this law, so far as regards capital punishment, the stealing in all out-houses which are not connected with the dwelling-house by some internal communication.

Another case in which it is proposed to reduce the penalties of the law, arises out of an act of the last session of parliament, which makes the robbery of gardens, without any distinction of circumstances, a transportable felony. The severity of the penalty renders this law in many instances inoperative. It is paralyzed by the stronger law of humanity and reason, which tells a man to overlook altogether the offence of the school-boy who robs an orchard, more from a wanton spirit of enterprise, than from vice, rather than consign him to a prison, and indict him for a felony.

We shall give more effectual protection to the owner of this species of property if, while we retain the severer penalties for all cases of aggravated delinquency, we empower a magistrate to hear the complaint, and if he shall think fit, to dismiss the offender for the first offence on payment of a reasonable fine.

I have now detailed the leading objects contemplated by the bill for consolidating the laws relating to Larceny, or I should rather say, I have given such examples of those objects as will enable the House to understand the general scope of the measure.

I will now proceed to explain the outline of the other, and not less important, bill, which is intended to effect improvements in the administration of the penal law generally.

It is impossible, Sir, to contemplate without painful reflections, the state of this country with respect to the number and the increase of criminal offences. It is useless, it is worse than useless, to conceal from ourselves the truth that there is not in this country that security from fraud and depredation which there ought to be in a well-constituted society: and that there has been of late years a rapid and alarming increase in the amount of that species of crime.

Many causes may concur to swell the amount of crime in this country, as compared with the amount of it in some other countries of Europe.

Property in this country is much greater, more generally extended, and necessarily more exposed. The freedom of action which is allowed to every man by our law, the absence of any control upon that action through the medium of police establishments, like those which exist in many countries, empowered to act upon vague suspicions, and preventing by unceasing vigilance the commission of offences that would otherwise be completed—such causes no doubt contribute in many instances to favour the early stages of vice in this country. But while I notice their existence and their effect, let it not be supposed that I am blind to the greater good which counterbalances the evil, or that it is my purpose by rash attempts at controlling the excesses which this freedom of action may engender, to impair the noble spirit, the enterprise and energy, that are its blessed offspring.

I shall now proceed to submit to the House a few details with respect to the comparative numbers of criminal offenders at different periods, and I deeply regret that the result is in some particulars so unsatisfactory.

In the seven years, ending December 1816, there were committed to the several gaols in England and Wales 47,522 persons charged with criminal offences.

In the seven years, ending December 1825, the number was nearly double, amounting to 93,718.

In the former period there were 29,361 convictions. In the latter 63,418.

In the former period there were sentenced to death 4,126 persons. In the latter 7,770.

In the former period 536 persons were executed. In the latter period 579; being an immense reduction, let it be observed, in the number of executions as compared with capital convictions.

It is a circumstance worthy of remark, that although in the country generally there would appear by these returns to have been so large an increase in the amount of crime, in the last of the two periods to which I have been referring, an increase nearly of one half the total amount, there has been by no means a corresponding increase in the number of criminal offenders in London and Middlesex, although in this district the increase of the population must have been at least as great as that in any other district.

Taking the more serious offences, those to which the penalty of death is attached, we shall find that in London and Middlesex 1,018 persons received sentence of death in the seven years ending December, 1816.

In the seven years, ending December, 1825, 1,124, being an increase in capital offences of not more than one eleventh.

The total number of convictions generally in the first period was 7,421. In the latter period 11,621.

If reference be made to the number of executions in London and Middlesex in late years, compared with former periods, I trust we shall be warranted in concluding that crimes of an atrocious character are on the decrease, though no doubt the reduction in the number of executions must be partly attributed to a greater forbearance in carrying into effect the extreme punishment of the law.

In seven years, ending with December, 1793, there were in London and Middlesex 272 persons executed.

In the same period ending with December, 1825, there were 165.

In two years alone 1786, and 1787, there were 138 executions for offences committed in London and Middlesex.

In the three last years there were only 39.

From the year 1810 to the year 1822, inclusive, there were 173 executions in England and Wales, for robbery on the highway, being at the rate of about fourteen in each year.

In 1823, there were five executions for this offence. In 1824, six. In 1825, six.

For the seven years preceding 1823, the number of convictions for this last offence, were at the rate of 140 in each year. In the last three years they have not exceeded on the average 110.

From the year 1810 to the year 1822, inclusive, there were 260 convictions in England and Wales for murder, being at the rate of 20 in each year.

In the year 1823, there were 12 convictions for murder; in 1824, seventeen; in 1825, twelve.

I trust, therefore, that although there has been so great an increase in late years in the total amount of committals for crime, I am warranted in the inference that crimes of the deepest die are less frequent than they formerly were, and that they are gradually decreasing in number.

With respect to the fact that crime has not increased in London and Middlesex, in the same proportion in which it has increased in every other district of England, almost without an exception, I cannot but think that the cause of this is chiefly to be looked for in the efficiency of that police establishment, which is placed under the superintendence of the Secretary of State, an establishment consisting merely of magistrates, with no higher authority than that which any justice of the peace possesses—of constables and patrol, with no other powers than those which the common constables can exercise, but efficient and active because their whole time is devoted to the duty which they have to perform, and because a responsibility is imposed upon them, which it is very difficult to impose practically upon the gratuitous discharge of public functions.

I am confident that the House will not require an apology for these general observations on the nature and extent of the criminal offences committed in this country, with which I have prefaced the explanation I will now give of the particular objects of the second measure which I propose to introduce, and which I trust I do not improperly designate a Bill to improve the Administration of the Law.

This bill will regulate in some respects the proceedings connected with the administration of the law, in the various stages of a criminal prosecution. It will re-enact, and more clearly define the duty of the coroner as to taking evidence upon an inquisition of manslaughter or murder—the binding by recognizance—and the certifying of the evidence, the recognizances and the inquisition, to the court before which the trial is to be.

In respect to the magistrate—it will define what is generally understood to be the law as to the power of admitting to bail, which now rests upon the construction of an obscure statute passed in the reign of Edward 1st.

It will make it obligatory on the magistrate to do that, which it is the general practice to do in case of felony (but a practice not enjoined by law), namely, to take the examinations upon which a prisoner is either committed to prison, or admitted to bail, in the actual presence of the prisoner himself. It will extend this obligation to cases of misdemeanour, as to which there is at present no provision by law, and it will require the return of examinations to the quarter sessions, to which they are not at present by any existing statute bound to be returned.

It will extend to subsequent and to future acts the principle of an act of king William, which places the felon in the same situation as to the consequences of his guilt, whether that guilt be proved by evidence—or confessed by himself—or admitted by his standing wilfully mute—or by his suffering outlawry. At present, there are several offences, constituted such by acts of the legislature which have passed subsequently to the act of king William, in the case of which, the same consequences do not follow to the offender, should he confess his guilt, or stand wilfully mute, as would follow in the case of his conviction by verdict upon evidence.

This bill will extend to accessaries to felony after the fact, the principle of the existing law, which makes accessaries before the fact triable, either in the county in which the principal felony was committed, or in the county in which the offence of becoming an accessary was committed. The propriety of such an enactment will be best shewn by referring to circumstances which recently occurred, connected with a very aggravated burglary in the county of Hertford.

Lord Cowper's house was broken into by night by a gang of eight persons, who went from London for the purpose, and his steward was robbed of the amount of the rents which he was known to have received from Lord Cowper's tenants the day before.

The booty was brought to London, and was divided into shares by a man of the name of Dudfield, who received a considerable portion of it, and who, though not himself present at the robbery, was no doubt actively concerned in planning it. He was apprehended and sent to Hertford for trial, but it was impossible to convict him there, because there was no proof that the offence with which he was charged, namely, that of being an accessary after the fact, had been committed in that county in which the principal offence had been committed. He was next arraigned at the Old Bailey, but he escaped there on the same ground. Ultimately he was convicted in Surrey after very great difficulty, and at an expense to the prosecutor of four hundred and twenty-six pounds for bringing that single offender to justice.

Should this bill pass into a law, the prisoner indicted under similar circumstances would be liable to be tried in Hertfordshire as well as in Surrey.

By this bill a discretionary power will be given to the judges of assize and to the court of quarter sessions to award to the prosecutor in certain cases of misdemeanour the actual expenses incurred by him.

On a trial for felony it is well known that the courts have such a power at present, and experience proves that the total want of it on trials for misdemeanour, is a serious obstacle to the due execution of the law. I am fully sensible that this power ought to be strictly defined and controlled. It ought not to extend to cases of assault, on account of the tendency it might have to encourage a litigious spirit and frivolous prosecutions, and it might probably be expedient to limit it to prosecutions for those offences to which the punishment of hard labour can be by law attached. I will give the fullest consideration to every suggestion for preventing the abuse or the injurious effects of this extension of the authority of courts of justice, but I must contend that by withholding the authority altogether, you frequently close the avenues of justice in instances in which the poorest classes are the sufferers, and in which the public interest loudly demands reparation from the offender.

What distinction in point of moral guilt, nay, in many cases, what distinction in point of injury to the sufferer, is there between actual rape and the attempt to commit a rape? The law calls the latter offence a misdemeanour, it expects that the party aggrieved, the infant child perhaps of a labouring man, shall over-

come all the natural feelings of delicacy and shame, and shall appear in a public court to prove the disgusting details of the injury she has received; it requires the sacrifice of time, the trouble which are inseparable from public prosecution, and after all, inflicts on the injured party the heavy penalty of paying the whole expenses of the suit. There may no doubt be occasionally subscriptions towards such expenses from private and casual sources, but the public purse is closed by law to the prosecutor in such a case as that which I have been detailing.

Take again the case of gross abuse of authority, or gross neglect of duty, by some public officer, amounting to misdemeanour, can we expect that private individuals will take upon themselves the invidious duty of lodging the complaint, the painful task of arranging the proofs, and finally the whole costs of prosecution, and all this out of a pure abstract love of justice and tender care for the public interests?

It is ridiculous to expect it; to withhold public aid from the prosecutor in such instances as these, amounts to the frequent denial of all reparation to the poor man, and to the impunity of great offenders.

My attention was drawn to the last instance which I have mentioned of imperfection in the law, by a gentleman whose name will be familiar to all who hear me, the reverend Mr. Sydney Smith, a magistrate of the county of York. He had committed a man on the charge of poisoning cattle; the man's house was searched by a constable, who found there the poison (arsenic), brought it to the house of Mr. Smith, and subsequently to screen the prisoner from punishment denied that any poison had been found. The constable confessed the part he had acted in this transaction, and yet the magistrate had no alternative but either to permit such flagrant misconduct to go unpunished, or to take upon himself the whole burthen of the prosecution.

Either alternative appears to me fraught with injustice, for which I hope to devise a remedy.

Perhaps in my own opinion a more extensive remedy ought to be applied than that which I am at present prepared to apply. But such a remedy might work a change in our institutions and habits too material to be hastily adopted, without feeling our way by the aid of that previous discussion which familiarizes the public mind to changes, that may be good, abstractedly considered, but that lose half their benefit, if they are too precipitately carried into effect.

If we were legislating de novo, without reference to previous customs and formed habits, I for one should not hesitate to relieve private individuals from the charge of prosecution in the case of criminal offences, justly called by writers upon law—Public Wrongs. I would have a public prosecutor acting in each case on principle, and not on the heated and vindictive feelings of the individual sufferer on which we mainly rely at present for the due execution of justice. Such feelings are rarely the fit measure of the propriety of prosecution. They are apt on the one side to overrate the wrong committed; on the other, still more apt to subside after the first impulse of revenge, and coupled with the just fear of trouble and expense, to lead to disgraceful compromises in which the interests of justice are altogether overlooked.

I would therefore make the prosecution of these public wrongs much more a matter of public concern than it is at present, I would (taking at the same time all proper security against the encouragement of undue litigation) indemnify parties more liberally from the pecuniary charge which the trial of a public offender entails, and I would by the appointment of a public prosecutor guard against malicious or frivolous prosecutions on the one hand, and on the other, I would ensure prosecution in cases in which justice might require it.

In Scotland crimes are prosecuted in this manner through the agency of a public officer, responsible for the justice and propriety of the prosecution when undertaken at the public charge, and for the conduct of it through its various stages

The public prosecutor in Scotland has another power devolved upon him—the exercise of which is frequently of the utmost advantage. In the prosecution of a crime, to which the penalty of death is attached by law, he is enabled in preferring the indictment, or indeed any subsequent stage of the trial, to restrict the sentence in case of conviction to a punishment short of death, thus empowering the jury to find a verdict of guilty with a perfect assurance that the death of the prisoner cannot be the consequence of that verdict.

Whether such a power can be safely and properly transferred to the institutions of our own country, I am not now prepared to give an opinion. Of this, however, I am confident, that if it should be found possible to borrow from the laws of Scotland suggestions for the improvement of our own law, no Englishman would be found to decry the adoption of such suggestions as monstrous innovations, the offspring of a ridiculous desire for useless uniformity, and the badges of disgrace to the country for whose benefit they were intended.

In the detail of the chief provisions of this bill, I have reserved for the last, that alteration in the existing law to which I attach the greatest importance.

It appears to me, Sir, that when a prisoner charged with a heinous crime, and proved to be guilty on clear evidence, escapes the penalty of the law upon some technical quibble, or in consequence of some omission of useless forms, a grievous injury is done to society. Not only is justice defeated in the particular case, but the law is discredited, and the numerous class that speculates keenly on the advantages to be derived from crime, compared with the risk of its punishment, sees in every instance of undeserved impunity, a fresh encouragement to the adventure. They may, and probably they do, grossly miscalculate—but what is that very circumstance, but a great additional evil to society?

It is surely a gross mistake to boast as the perfection of any system of law, that it favours the escape of the party accused.

That law I apprehend to be most perfect, which most certainly ensures the conviction of the guilty man, and the acquittal of him who has been unjustly accused. But the acquittal of the innocent ought, in justice to innocence, to be upon the merits of the case. The innocent man derives no benefit from the advantage which may be taken of mere informalities; on the contrary, if that advantage be taken in his case, he forfeits, perhaps, the only chance he has of rescuing his character from stigma, by the proof in open court, that the charge against him is totally unfounded.

When I say that the law is most perfect which ensures with the greatest certainty the conviction of the guilty, and the acquittal of the innocent, I ought to add as a qualification, that the law ought to ensure that conviction and acquittal upon principles not capable of being misapplied and perverted.

There are, for instance, provisions in the criminal law of France, calculated, no doubt in individual instances, to elicit truth, but which I should never wish to see ingrafted on the practice of this country.

I should deprecate anything approaching to the compulsory examination of an accused party; above all, I should be unwilling to see the judge who presides at a criminal trial, actively concerning himself in the conduct of that trial. I should fear that the general tendency of such an interference would be, if not to create in the mind of the judge by insensible degrees, a leaning in favour of the accusation rather than the defence, at least, to lead to inferences on the part of the jury as to the impressions of the judge, which might unduly influence their verdict.

I should deprecate the temptation which it might create to the display of superior acuteness in the examination of evidence, every thing in short, which could give to the judge the character of a party to the cause, rather than that of a perfectly unbiassed arbiter.

To return, however, to the immediate object to which I wished to call the attention of the House, namely, the expediency of devising some means, which, at the same time that they in no degree endanger the security of the person unjustly accused, shall diminish the chances of escape to the guilty man through mere quibbles or useless technicalities.

If any one will review the grounds upon which great offenders, of whose guilt there could not be a question—whose guilt had been proved in evidence—nay, upon whom a verdict—upon whom even judgment itself had passed—have still escaped punishment; he cannot rise from that review without lamenting such melancholy triumphs of legal forms over substantial justice.

Ought notorious guilt to be entitled to the same impunity with proved innocence, because, after judgment it is discovered, (to quote the phrases of this bill, which I have had prepared), that in the indictment for a felony there is wanting some proper addition to the name of the defendant, or because there is the want of a *profert*, or *prout patet per recordam*—or because there is the omission of *vi et*

armis et contra pacem? Yet these are the grounds upon which offenders have escaped.

Ought the murderer to have all the benefit of acquittal, because the murdered man had three Christian names, and only two of them are set forth in the indictment? or because the wound which caused his death is not described with entire accuracy?

Surely we may rely on the dictates of common sense, and be assured that these things are not perfections in the law. But if I am called upon for professional authority, I will cite the beautiful expressions of sir Matthew Hale, and let them stand as the fitting preamble to the enactment I propose.

In the history of the Pleas of the Crown, sir Matthew Hale concludes the chapter on the forms of indictment with these memorable remarks:

"And thus far, touching the forms of indictment, wherein generally we are to take notice that in favour of life great strictnesses have been in all times required in points of indictments, and the truth is, that it is grown to be a blemish and inconvenience in the law, and the administration thereof; more offenders escape by the over-easy ear given to exceptions in indictments, than by their own innocence, and many times gross murders, burglaries, robberies, and other heinous and crying offences, escape by these unseemly niceties, to the reproach of the law, to the shame of the government, and to the encouragement of villainy, and to the dishonour of God. And it were very fit, that by some law this over-grown curiosity and nicety were reformed, which is now become the disease of the law, and will, I fear, in time grow mortal, without some timely remedy."

In the bill which I had prepared for the purpose of applying this timely, or, I should rather say, this tardy remedy, it was originally proposed to enact, that, if upon any trial for felony or misdemeanor, the jury shall be satisfied that any person, time, fact, matter or thing, touching which evidence is given, is really the same person, time, fact, matter, or thing intended by the indictment, it shall be lawful for the jury to find the defendant guilty, notwithstanding any variance in the name or description contained in the indictment.

It was thought, however, by some whom I consulted, and in whose judgment I place implicit confidence, that this enactment goes too far, and that it might introduce a laxity and uncertainty into indictments more mischievous than the excessive subtilty which it is intended to correct. I shall propose, therefore, to limit the enactment, at least for the present, to a specification of those defects which shall not (as at present they do) vitiate an indictment after verdict, or after confession or default.

I have now, Sir, I fear, at very unreasonable length, detailed the objects of the two measures which I propose to introduce.

They may not perhaps answer the expectations of some who call out for the immediate and simultaneous revision of the whole of the Criminal Law.

To those I answer, in the first place, that they are little aware of the difficulties of far less extensive projects, of the labour and caution, and judgment which are requisite in every step of such an undertaking as that to which the present motions refer.

The mere collection of dispersed statutes under one head is an easy process, compared with the more important task of rejecting what is superfluous, clearing up what is obscure, weighing the precise force of each expression, ascertaining the doubts that have arisen in practice, and the solution which may have been given to those doubts by decisions of the courts of law.

In the second place, I answer, that nothing would be more unwise than to force on the country in too rapid succession, these alterations in the law. Even if we could have an entire confidence, that the substituted law was in itself perfect, without a blemish or omission, still we must recollect, that we are not the instruments for carrying it into effect, and we shall defeat our intentions, and blight the prospects of real improvement, unless we give leisure to the various authorities on whose assistance we must depend; nay, to the country generally, to comprehend the full scope of the projected changes. Let us not distract and confound society by a multiplicity of new arrangements relating to matters of such importance, and of such constant recurrence in the daily business of life.

It cannot, I think, be justly said, that, of late years at least, the march of amendment in the law has been too slow.

During the four years that I have held

the appointment which I now hold, the following measures have been carried through parliament:—

The whole of the statute law relating to prisons, and prison discipline has been, after deliberate inquiries, commenced by my predecessor (lord Sidmouth), consolidated and amended.

The severity of the criminal law has been mitigated by extending the benefit of clergy to many offences that, before, were capital felonies; and one great objection to that severity has been altogether removed, by enabling the judges to abstain from passing sentence of death in every case, excepting that of murder.

The laws relating to the punishment of transportation have been revised and collected into one statute.

The laws relating to the effect of pardons from the Crown, and to the rights of convicts after pardon, and after the fulfilment of their sentence, have been placed upon just principles.

The abuses that grew out of the practice that prevailed with regard to writs of error have been corrected. And lastly:—The jury act, comprising the regulations that were previously dispersed in sixty-six acts of parliament, which now no longer encumber the Statute-book, has been passed, and has, I have every reason to believe, materially improved the constitution of juries.

I have entered into this detail of what has been actually done, for the purpose of satisfying the House, that there is no indisposition on my part to proceed in the review and improvement of institutions connected with the administration of the criminal law, though I certainly deprecate that rapid progress, which is inconsistent with mature deliberation, and which leaves behind it, in its thoughtless career, the various instruments, without whose concurrence it is useless to advance.

There may, Sir, perhaps, be some who may think it extraordinary, that I, who have not had the advantage of professional practice, or even of a legal education, should undertake the introduction of measures, the details of which must necessarily require so much of professional and technical learning. But let it be recollected, that I am placed in an office which devolves upon me the duty of superintending, in many important respects, the administration of justice, which entitles me to advise the Crown as to the remission or execution of almost every sentence of the law, and which gives me daily, I might say, hourly opportunities of witnessing the practical operation of the statutes which I am attempting to simplify and amend. These considerations will probably relieve me from the charge of any unwarranted and presumptuous interference in matters which I do not comprehend.

I should be indeed open to that charge, if in presenting these bills to the House, I were offering my own crude speculations, unaided by the learning and experience of professional men. No, Sir; it has been my good fortune to profit by the willing assistance of men who yield to none in respect to general acquirements, to profound knowledge of the principles of law, or to experience in its practice. I owe the preparation of these bills to those gentlemen through whose labour and skill the Jury Act of last session was prepared; to Mr. Hobhouse, the Under Secretary of State in the Home Department (to whom, but for the relation in which he stands to me, I would do much more ample justice), and to Mr. Gregson, a barrister of high eminence on the Northern Circuit, justly respected by all who know him. The bills, thus prepared, have been submitted to all the judges, and from many of those eminent individuals, from Mr. Justice Bailey, Baron Hullock, Mr. Justice Holroyd, Mr. Justice Burrough, and Mr. Justice Gaselee, I have received very useful suggestions. The assistance which has been afforded by the lord chief justice, I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. He has devoted to the minute examination of these measures all the leisure which he could spare from the immediate pressure of his judicial duties; and has, I fear, encroached upon that repose which was essential to the restoration of his health.

In the profession of the law generally, I have found the utmost readiness to cooperate in the work which I have undertaken. It is the fashion to impute to that profession an unwillingness to remove the uncertainty and obscurity of the law, from the sordid desire to benefit by its perplexity. This is a calumny which I know to be unfounded; for I have never made, in the progress of this work, a single application for assistance to any member of the profession of the law, which has not been received in the spirit which becomes a generous mind, rising above the narrow prejudices of habit, and the paltry view to

private gain. There is one gentleman among those who have thus shown a willingness to give assistance—to whom I must make this public return of my acknowledgments, I allude to Mr. Russell, a gentleman who has rendered important service to the law by most valuable publications, and who has offered suggestions with respect to many provisions included in these bills that are entitled to every attention.

I now leave to the consideration and decision of the House, the measures into which I have entered at such unreasonable length. They will, I trust, be found, after full investigation, not unworthy of the final sanction of parliament.

They propose no encroachments upon civil liberty, no extension of executive authority, no rash subversion of ancient institutions, no relinquishment of what is practically good, for the chance of speculative and uncertain improvement. "The work which I propound," as lord Bacon says, "tendeth to pruning and grafting the law, and not to plowing up and planting it again; for such a remove I should hold indeed for a perilous innovation."

Whatever, Sir, may be the ultimate decision of this House, with respect to the measures themselves, it will not, I am confident, condemn the motives which have prompted me to the undertaking.

I can have no motive, but the desire to improve the opportunities which have been placed within my reach, and to exert to useful ends, the influence and authority, which constitute, if rightly applied, the real value of high official station.—And, Sir, if there be mixed with that desire any latent feeling of a more personal nature, why should I disavow the legitimate ambition, to leave behind me some record of the trust I have held, which may outlive the fleeting discharge of the mere duties of ordinary routine, and that may, perhaps, confer some distinction on my name, by connecting it with permanent improvements in the judicial institutions of the country?—The right hon. Secretary concluded, amidst loud cheers, with moving, "That leave be given to bring in a Bill for Consolidating and Amending the Laws relative to Larceny, and to such offences of stealing and embezzling, and of receiving stolen property, as are cognizable in England."

Sir *M. W. Ridley* said, that no act of the right hon. Secretary would hand down his name to posterity with so much honour as his conduct relative to the amendment of the law. He was glad to see that the right hon. gentleman made no job of it; and he hoped that he would follow up his present measures by a consolidation of the general Statute Law. There was one subject to which he wished particularly to call the right hon. Secretary's attention; namely, the exportation of horses. The old law, which forbade the exportation of horses, remained still unrepealed, although a new one was enacted, which allowed the exportation of them, on payment of a certain duty. The consequence of the existence of the old law was, that any man might prevent the exportation of a mare, by making a tender of 6*s.* 8*d.* Foreign countries acting on the same principle against us, prevented the exportation of mares to England; so that a gentleman who might have taken a mare to the continent, would not be allowed to bring her back again to England. This state of the law created considerable inconvenience in Yorkshire, and other places, and deserved prompt amendment. He hoped the measures of the right hon. gentleman would have a tendency to check that excessive spirit of making new laws, which loaded the Statute-book with so many useless enactments.

Mr. *N. Calvert* said, he had never heard a proposition which gave him more unfeigned pleasure than the one just submitted to the House. But he wished to mention one important subject, which well deserved the attention of the right hon. gentleman. Throughout the country were to be seen asylums, penitentiaries, &c. for the reception of persons convicted of minor offences. If a man abstained from committing a felony, he might be all his life in the commission of misdemeanors and minor offences of every kind. The only punishment he underwent was, imprisonment in one of those receptacles, from which he came out worse than when he entered, and was allowed to recur to old habits and corrupt new associates. The great mischief was that of allowing the offenders to remain in this country. In his opinion, every person convicted of felony should be transported for life, and the gradation of punishment should be acted on in the place where the party was sent to. Such a mode of punishment would, in the first place, enable the criminal himself to contract moral habits, and would, in the next

place, remove him from the opportunity of spreading contamination at home. The House might depend upon it, that by following this system a few years, the number of criminals would be reduced by one-half.

Sir *R. Wilson* highly approved of the proposed measure, but wished to call the attention of the right hon. gentleman to a species of offence which harrowed up the feelings and destroyed the happiness of so many. He alluded to the crime of child-stealing. At present, a person might steal a child with impunity, the law punishing only for the robbery of the clothes. He trusted that such an outrage upon humanity and reason would be got rid of.

Mr. *Dickinson* considered the speech of the right hon. Secretary the most luminous statement he had ever heard. As to the expenses of public prosecutions, they ought to be defrayed out of some particular fund. They fell at present on landed property, which was unable to bear further burthens.

Mr. *C. Wilson* was anxious to add his voice to the general expression of approbation bestowed on the clear and able speech of the right hon. Secretary. He thought the expenses of prosecutions for assaults on officers in the discharge of their duty ought to be paid by the government.

Mr. *Lockhart* expressed his concurrence with the House in their approbation of the measure of the right hon. Secretary. There was, he said, an absurd law, which prevented a prisoner from reading or seeing the indictment on which he was to be tried. That law ought to be repealed. He agreed with the right hon. gentleman, that we ought not to have an unconstitutional or preventive police, such as they had on the continent; but a strong protective police was a useful body. The old magisterial office of constable, when properly exercised, did much good. There still existed a similar officer in Germany, who possessed the power of detaining offenders for a day or night, until they were brought to a regular examination. We ought to have some such officer in England. It appeared that in the metropolis crime had not increased, but that in the country it had nearly doubled. Now, what was the difference to be attributed to, except the residence of an active police in the metropolis? Those straggling places in the country where the population was very great, and where there was no adequate police, were the hotbeds of crime. There was no check to the growth of vice in such places, except the control of parents, and that check was materially weakened by the intervention of the poor-laws.

Mr. *Abercromby* entirely concurred in the tribute of praise which had been paid to the speech of the right hon. gentleman. He considered the subject to be one of great importance, and sufficient to engage the attention of the greatest mind. In the general proposition laid down by the right hon. Secretary he fully agreed. No one, indeed, could deny that the law ought to be made accessible to all. He wished to express his great satisfaction at having lived to see the day when a minister of the Crown had risen in his place to declare his opinion, that the criminal law of the realm needed revision. Many members must recollect the difficulties which an hon. and learned friend of his had to encounter when he endeavoured to alter the criminal law. He had been told that it was presumption to attempt it. Upon the suggestion of that distinguished person, the House did, indeed, recognize the principle, that promptitude and certainty were essential requisites in the law. He entreated the right hon. gentleman to ask himself whether, the mere announcement of this measure did not proclaim the defects of the law; and he called upon him to prosecute still further his amendments of it. The right hon. gentleman had stated, that 8,000 persons had been convicted of capital crimes within seven years. He felt a desire, when this statement was made, to interrupt the right hon. gentleman with an inquiry as to how many of this number had been executed; for if that statement went forth, and it was believed that all the 8,000 had been executed, there would arise a most unjust and unfounded prejudice against the law of this country. He attributed a great proportion of the increased crime in the agricultural districts, to the operation of the game-laws. He trusted that the right hon. gentleman would keep those laws uppermost in his mind; and that some alteration in them, ere long, would add to the benefits which, by his jury-bill, as well as by the measure now before the House, the right hon. gentleman had conferred upon the country.

Sir *J. Sebright* also thought that the increase of crime in the country was at-

tributable to the game-laws. He would appeal to any country magistrate to say, whether he had not found, in the course of his experience, that the greater part of the men apprehended for serious crimes, did not attribute their situation to having been concerned in poaching.

Mr. *Sykes* said, he trusted that the remedy before them for acknowledged evils would be found efficient. He was glad to hear that the law which so cruelly punished a boy for stealing an apple was to be revised. It was ridiculous to punish so trivial an offence in so severe a manner. He thought there were very few members of that House who had not been guilty of it. With regard to the matter of costs, they ought to be particularly cautious how they trusted magistrates with a discretionary power of that kind over the county rates. He meant particularly magistrates of towns who had large personal property, but which was not subject to the county rate. There were other ways in which the costs might be defrayed. In misdemeanors, for example, the punishment was fine and imprisonment. Now, could it not be so arranged, that magistrates should have the power of giving part, or all of the fine to the prosecutor?

Sir *G. Chetwynd* approved of the measure, but objected to the expense likely to be cast upon each county by the prosecutions for assaults and certain other offences. He was aware that this was a serious charge upon individuals, but he nevertheless hoped that the right hon. gentleman would be cautious in adding this burthen to the county rates. He was surprised to hear an hon. member state that there was no specific mode of punishing persons guilty of child-stealing, otherwise than by prosecuting the parties for stealing the clothes. The fact was, that the act of the 34th of George 3rd, c. 101, made the stealing of children a grand larceny.

Mr. *Estcourt* thought it was a mistake to attribute the increase of crime in the country to the operation of the game-laws. He rather looked for the cause of that increase in the poverty and privation endured by the lower classes. With respect to the payment of costs upon prosecutions for misdemeanor, he agreed in the principle, but thought the expense should be defrayed, not out of the county rate, which touched only one description of property, but out of the general taxation of the country.

Mr. Alderman *Brydges* suggested that some mode of disposing of juvenile offenders ought to be adopted, as it was found that the alternative of imprisoning them, or letting them run about the streets, was calculated to corrupt and demoralize them.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* protested that he did not know how to frame an act of parliament which would prevent children from running about the streets; but any suggestion from the hon. member to that effect he should attend to with great pleasure. The provisions of his measure generally he wished to have thoroughly canvassed, and should feel obliged to any hon. gentleman who would take the trouble to suggest alterations in it. There was one alteration in the law relative to estreating recognizances which he should deem it peculiarly important to make as soon as possible. Nothing was more common than for persons who were bound over to appear as witnesses, upon prosecutions, and not called in court, to be actually arrested, perhaps years afterwards, owing to some error as to their appearance or non-appearance. As an instance of this vexatious practice, the right hon. gentleman stated the contents of a petition which he had just received from a prisoner in Shrewsbury gaol, who had been arrested on the estreating of his recognizances for a prosecution in the year 1818, he having been present in court while the trial went on, but not having been called as a witness. With respect to the payment of costs in cases of misdemeanor at sessions, he believed that they would be far lighter in amount if paid out of the county-rate than out of the general funds of the country. He had observed that all expenses allowed at sessions by magistrates who had an immediate desire to keep the county expenses down, were much lighter than those given by the judges of assize.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

STEAM VESSELS IN SCOTLAND.] The *Lord Advocate* rose to move for leave to bring in a bill to regulate vessels navigated by Steam in Scotland. The object of his bill was, he said, to prevent accidents, and to take care that the persons appointed to navigate Steam-vessels should be properly qualified, that the vessels should undergo examination, and be obliged to carry lights, and that in navigating them, they should follow the same rule as those observed by carriages in the streets.

Mr. *Hume* said, he would not directly oppose the bill, but he had great doubts of the utility of it. It was brought on in consequence of some recent accidents, which every one must lament; but he did not approve of the system of legislating upon particular events. The public might be left, he thought, to take care of itself. People would choose their steam-packets as they chose other conveniences that they wanted, and would take those which had the best reputation for safety.

Sir *H. Parnell* had strong doubts of the propriety of such a bill as this. Unless the learned lord could show that there was a necessity for the measure, it would be better not to interfere. In consequence of some accidents which happened between Liverpool and Dublin some years ago, a bill containing regulations of this sort requiring inspection, &c. was enacted; but the law was altogether neglected. A law of this sort was as applicable to stage coaches as to steam-vessels.

Sir *E. Harvey* said, that if the bill was brought in, it ought to be general. It was as much wanted in other parts of the kingdom as it was in Scotland.

Mr. *Sykes* objected to any bill of this sort proposing intricate regulations, which it would be impossible to carry into effect. It would be better to leave the conduct of the captain free, and not to interfere with him.

The *Lord Advocate* said, that the object of the bill was to establish public rules for the regulation of steam vessels. Had those regulations been in existence a year ago, the accident in October last could not have occurred.

Sir *J. Newport* would object to the motion. If the people of Scotland were not to be trusted with the management of their own steam-boats in their own way, it would be much better to introduce a bill to prevent them from using them altogether.

Sir *C. Cole* hoped, if any enactment were deemed necessary, that it would be applicable to all parts of the empire. The best regulation that could be suggested was that which prevailed in the royal navy, in which, by given signals, each ship knew on which side of the other it ought to pass. Had that principle obtained, the fatal accident alluded to could not have happened.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* hoped that hon. gentlemen would not refuse permission to bring in the bill. A notion had become prevalent, that there was a disposition in the House to rob Scotland; and it would, indeed, be a most serious robbery to deprive her of her inhabitants. A long list of grievances under which Scotland laboured had recently been sent out into the world; and if the House of Commons now refused to give a hearing to this bill in the first instance, the refusal would be set down as an additional item in the long catalogue.

Mr. *Hume* strongly urged the learned lord to withdraw his bill.

Mr. *Hobhouse* trusted that the learned lord would withdraw his bill. The people of Scotland would not thank him for this interference. He might just as well bring in a bill to prohibit them from navigating by steam.

The House divided: For bringing in the bill 70; Against it 26: Majority 44.

Local Jurisdictions in Ireland.] Mr. *S. Rice* moved for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual execution of the laws in cities and towns corporate, and other local jurisdictions in Ireland.

Mr. *Goulburn* had no immediate objection to the motion, but reserved his right on the introduction and discussion of the bill to suggest any curtailments, or to offer any clauses which he might deem necessary to prevent the infringement upon chartered rights and privileges of corporations.

Mr. *Hutchinson* hoped that the bill would be printed before it was discussed, and that it would be sent over to Ireland, and ample time allowed for the statement of objections to it on the part of bodies interested.

Mr. *R. Martin* said, that he looked on this bill as a great improvement in the laws of Ireland. It would go to cure the abuses that were obvious to all; such as the registration of freeholds. He knew some counties and towns, in which freeholds were kept unregistered for years.

Mr. *Frankland Lewis* thought the measure ought not to be confined to Ireland. As a general principle of legislation, it was capable of being applied to many parts of this country with advantage. At the same time it was a question not free from difficulty, and he hoped no steps would be taken but upon mature consideration and certain information. The greatest difficulty would be to provide a

local magistracy sufficiently responsible for these trusts; care at the same time being taken to guard against infringements of local jurisdictions. He dwelt himself in a part of Wales where they suffered from that unavoidable defect. It would be very desirable if a power were given to the Crown to appoint magistrates to act in such cases; provided it were done with a nice regard to chartered and corporation rights.

Mr. *Warre* concurred in the sentiments of the hon. gentleman, and advised that some steps should be taken for reforming local jurisdictions in England as well as in Ireland.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

NON-RESIDENT BURGESSES IN IRELAND.] Sir *John Newport* rose, to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act of 21 Geo. 2nd, chap. 10, sec. 8 (Irish statutes), commonly called the Newtown act. In that act there was a clause for regulating the election of members of parliament in Ireland, in which it was provided, that in any borough or town corporate, not being a city, in which a number of resident Protestants, sufficient for the purposes of that act, did not exist, the right of voting should be extended to, and exercised by Protestants non-resident therein. In the year 1780, by a most beneficial statute, one of the clauses of this act was utterly done away with. By a strange misconception the Test act was still supposed to be in force in Ireland; and he remembered, in the year 1810, that one of the cabinet ministers had told him, that his principal objection to Catholic emancipation was the Test act, although that act had been done away with in the year 1793, just seventeen years before. In the year 1793, the legislature, acting on a more liberal scale of policy with respect to the interests of Ireland than had been formerly adopted, repealed many of the laws that shackled the energies of the country, and, among others, the law was repealed by which Catholics were prevented from voting at elections for the return of members to serve in parliament. By this measure the Catholic freeholders of Ireland were allowed to participate in the privileges enjoyed by their Protestant fellow-subjects. Much had certainly been done for Ireland by the repeal of obnoxious statutes; but much remained to do before the Statute-book could be freed from many existing laws (the remnants of former oppression and misrule) by which the energies of Ireland were still crippled. All acts subsequent to the reign of Geo. 2nd should be swept from the Statute-book, and not a trace should be left to remind that unhappy country of her former degradation. With respect to the measure which he was about to submit to the House, it was notorious that in a great number of cases the majority of persons in Ireland who voted for members to serve in parliament, were non-residents of those particular places for which members were returned. In the large and populous town of Belfast a considerable portion of those who were entitled to vote were not residing in the town. The same might be said of Dundalk and Newry. Now, the ostensible cause of this was the act of Geo. 2nd, commonly called the Newtown act, which gave the power to non-residents to vote for the return of members to serve in parliament. He would not occupy the House with any further observations at present, but would move, as considerable difficulty at present existed in consequence of the privilege enjoyed by non-resident freeholders in Ireland of voting at elections, for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act 21 Geo. 2nd, chap. 10, section 8, commonly called the Newtown act. Before he sat down, he begged to disclaim any motive of a personal or interested nature in proposing this motion. He had no ulterior object to accomplish. His only wish was to benefit his country; and should he have the good fortune to succeed in this instance, he should feel that he had accomplished a practical good. He knew that much inconvenience arose in Ireland in consequence of non-residents being allowed to vote; and it was on those grounds that he wished for their exclusion.

Mr. *Goulburn* said, he was sure that it was quite unnecessary for the right hon. baronet to disclaim interested motives, in bringing forward the present motion. He of all other men would be the last on whom an imputation of the kind would fairly rest. Yet, while he fully acquitted him of interested motives, he could not concur with him in the views which he had taken on the subject under consideration. He did not conceive that the measure proposed would be attended with the benefits which were anticipated. On the contrary, he foresaw considerable inconvenience in it. The proposition of the right hon. baronet rested on one single

ground; namely, that the statute sought to be repealed having passed eighty years ago, was unnecessary now, inasmuch as the reasons which were stated in the preamble had ceased to exist, and the act was no longer applicable. This was the ground on which the right hon. baronet took his stand in proposing the present motion; but might it not occur, that although the causes which led to an enactment might have ceased, the provisions of that enactment being wise and wholesome, should still continue? It was clearly no argument in favour of the abolition of a law, that its application was not immediately felt. The simple question for consideration was, whether non-resident voters who had for eighty years exercised the right of voting in boroughs and corporate towns, should cease to enjoy that privilege. Now this was a question which involved a great deal; for it did not relate solely to Ireland, but the effects of the proposed measure would also extend to England. And, was the House prepared to adopt such a change in the elective franchise of this country? The House was called upon to take measures for excluding non-residents from voting at elections, both here and in Ireland; but, looking to the circumstances on all sides, and the difficulties by which the measure was surrounded, the statute should not, he thought, be repealed. At the time of the passing of this law, persons of the first respectability resided in those places in which the elective franchise was exercised; but in time, from the change inseparable from the condition of man, it naturally occurred, that persons wishing to reside elsewhere, betook themselves to distant provinces. It was therefore that the act of Geo. 2nd was passed, and its effects were found to answer every object which the legislature had in view. With this impression of its practical results, it would be wrong to repeal this law. But there were still stronger reasons for opposing the motion. The House should look to the consequences that would follow if this law were repealed. The act declared, that all non-resident electors should have a vote. Now, if the majority of persons entitled to vote should happen to be non-residents, what would be the effect of the right hon. baronet's proposition? It would be this—that there would scarcely be a single person to vote for the return of members to serve in the next parliament. Under these circumstances, could there be a more unwise step than to deprive the present non-residents of the privilege which they had heretofore enjoyed? The question was one of great importance. It was not one that involved but little. It involved a great deal, and it required the gravest deliberation of the House. Under all the circumstances, he was forced to oppose the motion.

Mr. *Spring Rice* supported the motion of his right hon. friend. He thought the right hon. secretary for Ireland had mis-stated both the fact and the law.

Mr. *Plunkett* said, he should not discharge his duty by giving a silent vote upon the present occasion; the more especially as he felt himself bound to oppose the motion. He did not believe that his right hon. friend had been guilty of any mis-statement, either in point of fact or of law. The question here was not between the charters, which required residence, and the 21st Geo. 2nd, which dispensed with residence, but it was a question between the act of Henry 7th, and the act of the 21st of Geo. 2nd. The act of Henry 7th required, that all freemen of cities and great towns should be residents; and the charters applied the provisions of that act to all boroughs; but the inconvenience was so great, that the legislature felt it necessary to do away with a restriction which, in their opinion at least, was unconstitutional; for the provision in the charters which, by the measure now proposed, it was intended to confirm, was not an extension, but a restriction of the elective franchise. He did not hesitate to say, that many of the charters of James 1st were not, to say the least of them, favourable to the principles of the constitution; for in several of them the principle of restriction was applied to the elected as well as to the elector, and, in more cases than one, such restriction had been held to be unconstitutional. He did not mean now to discuss that principle, but it was sufficient for his purpose, that the legislature, in the time of George 2nd, had thought fit to repeal that restriction, as it applied to boroughs and corporate towns, and that that act had remained in force now nearly seventy years. The measure now proposed was not prospective, but, on the contrary, would have a retrospective operation, and would bear upon individuals who had for years been in possession of the elective franchise. The act of George 2nd declared that no person elected to, or voting for, a candidate for any office in

any borough or town corporate in Ireland, should be impeached for non-residence, and therefore the consequence of repealing that act would be to impeach persons who were not non-resident. It might be said, that persons who had enjoyed the franchise for a certain number of years could not be impeached. That was true; but it was equally true, that persons who had not enjoyed the franchise for that number of years would not be protected. He was not prepared to state what number of persons had been in possession of the elective franchise for six years, and were therefore impeachable; but the House would pause, now that they were approaching to the period of the natural dissolution of that House, before they agreed to the passing of such a measure as that now contemplated, without having first ascertained the number of persons who would fall within its operation. As those persons had been admitted to enjoy this privilege for seventy years, there could be no objection to allowing them to enjoy it for seventy-one years. He thought the right hon. baronet ought, under the present circumstances, to wait for a new session of parliament for the introduction of such a measure. The consequence of this repeal might, for aught the House knew, be the disfranchisement of whole corporations. The motion of the right hon. gentleman went to repeal an act passed forty years previous to the Union of Ireland with this country. Now, at the time of the Union, in 1800, when a selection was made of the boroughs which ought to continue to send members to the united parliament, that selection was calculated upon the principle of the number of electors entitled to vote, compared with the state and condition of the numbers in those towns. He should, therefore, oppose this motion; first, as a measure of general policy, which went to narrow the elective franchise; and, secondly, because he thought it would be an act of injustice to open again an arrangement made at the period of the Union. It had been said, that a similar bill had been brought in upon a former occasion, and thrown out upon the second reading. That circumstance was, in his opinion, an argument against, rather than in favour of the motion; and he should, instead of waiting to vote against the bill, upon the second reading, take the preliminary step of opposing the introduction of it.

Mr. *R. Martin* ventured to remind the right hon. secretary for Ireland of the history of the act of George 2nd, which was the most disgraceful that ever took place in the Irish parliament. That act was procured by a person possessed of great influence in the Irish parliament, who was generally known by the name of Jack Promise, who exchanged a borough in the west, for a borough in the north, of Ireland. In the borough of Newtown Limavady, which Jack Promise got in swap for the other borough, he found that he could not conveniently manage the resident Protestant voters, and that it would be better if he could extend the franchise to his own servants and followers; and he therefore procured the sanction of the Irish parliament to the 21st Geo. 2nd; but in order to screen his object from the eyes of the public, he made the words of the act general. The right hon. baronet was entitled to the thanks of the House and the country. He ought not to be told that he did wrong to introduce it, because of its retrospective effects. But might not that difficulty be got over by the insertion of a clause to save existing rights? If the bill were allowed to go into a committee, a clause to that effect might be inserted. "Let us wait," said the attorney-general for Ireland, "until the general election." The act should be repealed now, and the new bill need not come into operation until the election would be over. This course would surely satisfy the right hon. and learned gentleman. As interested motives had been hinted at, he begged distinctly to state, that he was not actuated by such motives. It was sixty or seventy years since the Galway case came before the courts of law. In the erroneous court, or rather the court of error—perhaps one term was as applicable as the other—it was determined, that that act had nothing whatever to do with Galway. He gave the motion his hearty concurrence. The only reasonable argument advanced against it was, that it interfered with existing rights; but that might be guarded against by a proviso of the nature to which he had alluded. This might be called "petty legislation." Some gentlemen seemed partial to that phrase. It had been applied to himself in advocating some of the measures which he had lately had the honour to introduce. But he, for one, did not think it petty legislation to prevent the recurrence of the cutting out of the tongue of a poor dumb beast, and sending it round on a plate, while it was yet quivering and reeking. Gentlemen might laugh and

sneer, but he could not consider that a law to prevent such barbarities could fairly be called petty legislation.

Mr. *Hutchinson* said, he would not offer any objection to the introduction of the bill, and to have it printed, in order to give an opportunity to those persons whose interests might be affected by it of seeing what were its provisions. At the same time that he did this out of respect to his right hon. friend, he would not conceal his opinion that the principle upon which the bill proceeded was highly objectionable. He thought that no existing interests ought to be interfered with, without giving to all the parties concerned the fullest opportunity of being heard on the subject.

Sir *J. Newport* said, he had heard no arguments which could induce him to withdraw his motion, and as he was convinced of the utility of the measure, he would take the sense of the House on it.

The House then divided: Ayes 38; Noes 76.

EPISCOPAL UNIONS IN IRELAND.] Sir *John Newport* rose to move for leave to bring in a bill to prevent Episcopal Unions in Ireland, and to restrain the granting of Dispensations. The bill, he observed, would secure to the Irish people the residence of their clergy in the parishes to which they were attached, and would restrain archbishops and bishops from making unions of parishes, for the purpose of providing for some of their friends in the church. The extent to which this power was carried would surprise the House; but he would not now enter into any of the details. There was one instance in which a bishop had united six parishes in one county with one situated in another; so that it was certain the clergyman could not be a resident where he might be most required. He would mention only another case, which was stated last year in the House by the hon. member for Louth; that a parish producing an income of 500*l.* a-year, had been united to another of 288*l.*, and these two to a third of 271*l.*, and these three to a fourth of 720*l.*, and these four to a fifth, the income of which was not specified, but which was said to be equal in amount to all the others. Was it, he would ask, right that such a power should be allowed to be exercised without restraint? Was it right that church property to such an amount should be accumulated in the person of one clergyman, while so many excellent and deserving curates were left without that fair provision to which they were entitled? The bill which he proposed to introduce would also go to prevent clergymen having the cure of souls, and deriving an income of 300*l.* a-year and upwards from the living, from holding any other living at the same time; and further it would enact, that any person already holding such living, and being presented to another of higher value, should give up the former. These were the outlines of the bill, which he hoped the House would give him leave to introduce.

Mr. *Goulburn* said, that he had himself prepared a measure on the subject, but he would not object to the introduction of the right hon. baronet's bill. He was glad to find that in some of the points he had the concurrence of the right hon. baronet. But in assenting to the introduction of this bill, he did not wish to be understood as pledging himself to support that part of the measure which related to pluralities.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEES.] Mr. *Littleton* rose for the purpose of redeeming the pledge he had given last session, to submit some resolutions on the subject of the formation of Committees on Private Bills. The House were aware that a committee was appointed on this subject in the last session, and had made a report, and some resolutions were founded on that report and printed; but, owing to the late period of the session, those resolutions had not been disposed of. He was glad the delay had taken place, because, upon a more mature consideration of the subject, he found that one of the resolutions which he then intended to propose would not be so practicable as another course which had been since suggested to him. The House were aware that there were two committees necessary on a private bill. The first was on the petition for leave to bring in the bill, which had to examine whether the usual standing orders had been complied with, and whether all the parties interested had received due notice. In this committee, though its inquiries were only as to certain matters of form, it often happened that there was as much effort made by parties on both sides, as there was afterwards in the committee on the bill itself. The lists of counties

from which members were selected to constitute committees on private bills, were, as the House was aware, made out about twenty-five years ago, by the Speaker. Formerly, members were selected from divisions of counties made by the circuits. But now they were made up from members serving for the counties, in which the bridge, road, or canal (he mentioned these by way of illustration), the subject of the bill, was situated, and also of the members for the counties adjoining. Now it happened, that the persons so selected were, from their local situation, likely to be affected in some way or other by the proposed bill, and they were found generally either to be all strongly opposed to, or warmly in favour of, the measure; by which it not unfrequently would happen, that the interests of parties adverse to their views might be overlooked. This was an evil to which he thought a remedy ought to be applied; and to effect this, one object of his resolutions would be, to alter the principle on which lists were made out. He would propose, that a list should be made, consisting half of country members, and half of members serving for remote parts of the united kingdom, as Ireland and Scotland, and in such numbers as would always ensure a sufficient number for a committee. He would have the members of that committee so mixed as to prevent the canvassing which had been carried to a great extent by attornies and other agents for private bills, who would not be likely to know who might be appointed members of such a committee.—But then came the great object, to prevent any undue bias for or against the bill. It suggested itself to him, that this might be obtained by allowing parties interested, who might have objections to particular members being on a committee, on the ground of their being in some way affected by the measure before it, to strike off certain members of those appointed, so as to leave a sufficient number for the purposes of the committee; but, on consideration, he thought that this might cause many delays, unless members were compelled to serve on committees when once appointed. His hon. friend, the member for Yorkshire (Mr. S. Wortley), who had great experience on the subject of private committees, had suggested a less objectionable, and, as it appeared to him, a much more effectual course; which was, that where complaints were made against the proceedings of a committee on a private bill, the parties complaining, on petition to the House, might have the subject referred to a committee of appeal, which would have the power of finally deciding on the whole matter. The selection of this committee should be made in the same manner as that of the committee of privileges—that was, that it should be made from members of counties, merchants, &c.; from this body a select committee should be chosen like election committees, by ballot; and to this committee the complaint against the committee on the private bill would be referred. To prevent, however, any frivolous complaints, he would propose, that this committee should have the power of awarding costs against the parties who might come before it without sufficient grounds. This he thought would have the effect of rendering the formation of the original committee more pure. He would not at present enter into any further details, as he did not anticipate any discussion on this evening. He would, therefore, move the first resolution, with the view of having the whole printed, and would name Wednesday next for taking them into consideration.—The following is a copy of the said resolutions:

1. "That the present distribution of counties, for the purpose of forming Committees on Private bills, prepared under the direction of the Speaker some years ago, has, from the great inequality of the numbers of members contained in each list, and from other causes, been found ill suited to the object for which it was framed:

2. "That, with a view more nearly to equalize numbers, and to correct too strong a prevalence of local interests on committees on private bills, it is expedient that a new distribution of counties should be made, containing in each list, as nearly as may be, one hundred and twenty members; one half only, or thereabouts, to be taken from the county immediately connected with the object of the bill, and the adjoining counties; and the other half from other counties of Great Britain and Ireland; and that the members serving for such counties should constitute the committee on each bill:

3. "That Mr. Speaker be requested to direct a new distribution of counties to be prepared at the commencement of each session, in such manner as shall be approved of by him, conformably to the principle of the foregoing resolution:

4. "That every committee on a private bill be required to report to the House the bill referred to it, with the evidence and minutes of the proceedings:

5. "That a committee be appointed at the commencement of every session of parliament, to be called the committee of appeals upon private bills, which committee shall consist of all the knights of the shire, all the members for cities, and such other members as may be named therein; so that the whole number appointed to serve upon such committee shall amount to two hundred at least:

6. "That where any party interested in a private bill, who shall have petitioned the House, and shall have appeared in support of his petition, by himself, his counsel, or agent, in the committee upon such bill, or where the promoters of a private bill shall be dissatisfied with any vote of the committee upon such bill, and shall petition the House, setting forth the particular vote or votes objected to, and praying that they may be heard by themselves, their counsel, or agent, against such vote or votes, such petition shall, together with the report of the committee upon the bill, and the minutes and evidence taken before such committees, be referred to a select committee of seven members of the House, to be chosen by ballot from the committee of appeals upon private bills, which select committee shall hear the arguments of the parties complaining of, and also of the parties supporting, such vote or votes, and shall report their opinion thereon to the House:

7. "That whenever a petition shall be presented, complaining of any vote of a committee upon a private bill, the House will fix a day whereon to ballot for a select committee, to whom such petition shall be referred, upon which day, at a quarter past four o'clock, or as near thereto as the question which may be then before the House will permit, the Speaker shall order the doors of the House to be locked, and the names of the members composing the committee of appeals upon private bills being written upon separate pieces of paper, and put into the glass, the clerk shall draw therefrom the names, until seven members of such committee, who shall be then present, and who shall not have voted in the committee upon the private bill to which the petition refers, shall have answered to their names, which seven members shall be the select committee to whom such petition shall be referred, and such select committee shall meet for business the following day at eleven o'clock, and continue to sit, de die in diem, until they shall have reported upon the same:

8. "That no member of such select committee shall absent himself therefrom during its sitting:

9. "That such select committee shall, if they think fit, after the hearing of such argument, order the party or parties complaining to pay the whole or any part of the costs attending the same, or the party or parties defending such vote or votes:

10. "That the party or parties complaining shall, previously to the ballotting for such select committee, enter into recognizances, him, her, or themselves, in the sum of 100*l.*, and two sureties in the sum of 50*l.* each, for the payment of such costs as may be awarded against him or them."

Lord *A. Hamilton* did not mean to offer any objection to the resolutions; but, as he understood the hon. member, the committee of appeal would rather have to try the merits of the former committee, than to decide on the question which had been the subject of the private bill. If this were so, he thought it would be attended with inconvenience. He gave his thanks to the hon. member for introducing these resolutions, because there were opinions in the public mind highly prejudicial to the character of committees on private bills.

Mr. *S. Wortley* could not deny, that there had been instances in which these committees had been guilty of injustice; but, generally speaking, they had done their duty ably and impartially.

The resolutions were ordered to be printed, and the debate upon them was adjourned to Wednesday.

BANK CHARTER AMENDMENT BILL.] Mr. *Lushington* moved the second reading of this bill. He said it was not his intention to take the discussion now, but the chancellor of the Exchequer purposed moving some important instructions in the committee.

Mr. *J. Smith* would not agree to suffer this bill to advance a single stage without offering it his opposition. A bill more absurd or ill-digested had never been introduced into that House. It was impossible it could pass in its present form.

Mr. *Hume* agreed with his hon. friend, that it was impossible the bill should pass

without material amendment. If he allowed the second reading to take place without opposition, he should stand committed to the principle of the measure; to which he decidedly objected. The bill was a mere pretence to do something, when nothing was really meant to be done. He would pay the Bank of England any sum of money by way of compensation for the relinquishment of its monopoly, rather than give his consent to a measure so defective and delusive as the present. Nothing was, in point of fact, conceded to the public. As the regulations of the present bill would prevent country banks with an unlimited number of partners from issuing their draughts payable in London, they would necessarily be so cramped in their operations, that they might as well be established in Kamschatka, for any benefit they could render to the mercantile world. They would, in effect, be cut off from all communication with the metropolis.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, that being favourable to the objects of the bill, he would not oppose the second reading; but it was obvious that it must undergo a total change in the committee, or be entirely inoperative; as, in its present shape, no parties could possibly act under its provisions. In fact, it was a mere copy of the Irish act of the last session, as garbled to meet the petty-fogging jealousies of the Bank of Ireland. It could not be conceived that such clauses could have originated with a great corporation like the Bank of England. These must necessarily be amended. To the principle of the measure, he repeated, he was entirely friendly.

The bill was then read a second time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.
Friday, March 10.

State of Exchequer Bills, and Transactions of Government with the Bank of England.] The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved the order of the day for going into a Committee of Supply. On the question, that the Speaker do leave the chair,

Mr. *Maberly* rose to address the House. He began by observing that, though he had heard a great deal lately of the mischief arising from over-trading, he had not heard it stated that the right hon. gentleman opposite had taken any part in producing any of the inconvenience under which the country was at present labouring. Now it was his opinion, that the government, and especially that part of it over which the right hon. gentleman presided, had, in concert with the Bank of England, added greatly to the previously existing causes of distress. He felt it to be his duty to point out where the great error in their conduct lay, and to show by what means they had aggravated the calamity under which the country had been recently suffering. The statement which he had to make he should divide into two parts. The first would relate to the mismanagement of the unfunded debt, and the latter to the misarrangement and mismanagement of the funded debt; both of which had, in his opinion, added greatly to the inconvenience of the country. He was now called upon to allude particularly to the manner in which the government had managed the issue of Exchequer-bills. He should suppose, from the ready eagerness with which certain hon. gentlemen came down on an evening to vote away 30 or 40,000,000*l.* of Exchequer-bills, that they did not know what the nature of those securities was. He was therefore induced, as he should found a strong case upon them, to enter into a description of this species of security. Exchequer-bills were bills issued for a debt previously contracted, which was usually denominated the unfunded debt. They were not payable on demand, though they were almost equally pressing and dangerous—they were rather bills on the government, payable at sight. He had a paper in his hand, which had been recently printed, showing exactly at what periods these bills at sight became bills payable on demand. And he ought here to inform the House, that when they were payable on demand, they became receivable as payment for the revenue, and that government, when it was obliged to pay them off, paid them off either in money or revenue receipts. Hence it was, that when government advertised that it was ready to pay off Exchequer-bills, the time was always found to be near that in which the revenue became due. Though he should have some difficulty in stating what portion of Exchequer-bills had been paid into the Exchequer on account of the revenue, he could now show what quantity of bills they had due on particular days, without having one shilling in their coffers to meet them. On the 6th of April, 1825, there

were 6,258,000*l.*; on the 6th July in the same year, 30,000,000*l.* of these promissory notes, payable at sight, due and receivable as money by the revenue. On the 11th of October, there were 20,160,000*l.*; and on the 6th of January, 7,400,000*l.* of these dangerous promissory notes in existence. This would be sufficient to show the danger which might arise from a too copious use of these securities. He expected to hear from the right hon. gentleman opposite, that this was the ordinary mode of getting money for the government. True, it might have been so; but then there was a wide difference between the time when the restrictions on the Bank were in existence and the present time, when the issues of the Bank were payable in gold. In looking at the debt thus created by the government, he was able to show how dangerous it was, not by putting an imaginary case, but by putting a case as it really had happened. In December last, Exchequer-bills were at 80*s.* discount. The government saw a depreciation of its paper arising out of its over-issue. No one could doubt that this paper, like any other paper, could be over-issued; for the proof of over-issue was discount, as the proof of the contrary extreme was premium. When, however, the Exchequer-bills were at a discount of 80*s.* the Bank very good-naturedly stepped in, and raised them to par. It was, moreover, at the pleasure of government to raise, whenever it might see occasion to do so, the interest upon this species of security. Notwithstanding all these advantages, they were not able to keep them from depreciation, and on the 14th of February they were again at a discount of 20*s.* Then the Bank stepped in again, and again the Exchequer-bills were raised to par. Could, it then, be doubted by any man who was acquainted with, or who would take the least trouble to understand the subject, that this species of paper was a most dangerous one to be afloat in the market? It appeared that the Bank had advanced 5,500,000*l.* towards the payment of the January dividends; and if they had not done so, it was impossible to say what inconvenience the country might not have felt from the immense amount of Exchequer-bills which were then abroad. The returns showed that in July last, the whole amount of those bills was 30,000,000*l.*, that between July and October there were issued 20,000,000*l.* and between October and January, 7,000,000*l.* All these sums might have been forced upon the government instead of money in payment of the revenue; and but for the measure he had alluded to on the part of the Bank, in taking up what was called the deficiency bills, that event must have happened. Where was the government to get money to pay the dividends but for the assistance of the Bank? And how was the Bank to give that assistance but by an extensive issue of notes? Then, said ministers, "If you will give us this, of which we are in present need, and if the exchange should take such a turn as to bring a demand for gold, we will give you another restriction act." Had he not a right, then, to call that a dangerous species of paper which produced consequences like these? He should be told, perhaps, that it was useful, because it was easily negotiable. That very facility increased the danger, and in proportion to the ease with which government adapted it to their own purposes, made it unadvisable for the public interests.—But, let the House suppose the country to be placed in circumstances of difficulty. Suppose the Russian army should march (and there was a greater probability that it would than that it would not), how would the government be able to clear the market of this paper, which then would become a positive and sensible inconvenience? What would become of the 24,000,000*l.* of paper issued by the Bank? If the exchanges which were always hung, as it were, upon a pivot, should turn round and be against this country, by what means could they be restored? The House had been told in one of the triumphant speeches of the right hon. gentleman, that this was the best and cheapest mode of carrying on the public business. This he wholly denied. When he had suggested to the right hon. gentleman, that a gradual diminution should be effected in the amount of Exchequer-bills, and that this species of unfunded debt should be discharged by means of a tax, he had been laughed at; but he was nevertheless sure that it would have been beneficial to the country, and he was sure that many opportunities had occurred of adopting that measure. There was an opportunity when the funds had been raised from 80 to 90. The ministers told the House that there had been a saving of 300,000*l.* a-year in the interest on the stock which had been reduced; but they forgot to state, as he

as he contended was the fact, that between 6,000,000*l.* and 7,000,000*l.* of capital had been lost to the country. It appeared to him, that instead of appropriating the sinking fund to the discharge of the funded debt of the country, on which it had no operation whatever, it would be better to use it for the relief of the unfunded debt. Upon this part of the finances he thought the conduct of the right hon. gentleman had not been such as was likely to prove beneficial to the country. The right hon. gentleman, in a flourishing speech, had said, that it was not expedient to carry this debt beyond certain limits. Perhaps he would say, that they were those limits which he meant, and if he did he (Mr. Maberly) would call upon the Bank of England to prove that this unfunded debt had been increased to a most dangerous amount. For these reasons, he should submit to the House certain resolutions on this subject, which he would now read; but before they were put, he should touch upon another branch of the subject, in which also he believed there had been considerable neglect.—The hon. member then read the following resolutions:—

"That it appears, by returns to the House, that on the 6th of January, 1826, the amount of Exchequer-bills outstanding and unpaid was, 37,502,017*l.* 9*s.* 7*d.* that on or about the 20th of December they were at a discount of 80*s.* and that it therefore became necessary to raise the interest previously granted on them, in order to prevent their being paid into the Exchequer as revenue, or a part of them being demanded in cash. And that, notwithstanding this advance of the rate of interest on Exchequer-bills, it became necessary to relieve the market by reducing the quantity on sale, which was effected by means of a large portion of them being absorbed in purchases made by the Bank, which brought them to about par at the end of the month.

"That on the 14th of February they were again at or about 21*s.* per cent discount, when the Bank came once more in the market, and brought them to par.

"That the Bank, from various circumstances, might not have been able thus to relieve the market without endangering its credit yet, had not relief been afforded, bills paid in as revenue might have left the Exchequer without any means of paying the dividends, provided the Bank could not advance the whole amount of them.

"That the Bank, in order to pay the January dividends, having already advanced 5,548,817*l.* 9*s.* 7*d.* it is highly improbable that it could at such a moment make a further advance of 3,128,183*l.* (the additional sum necessary) without placing itself in a most hazardous situation; and it appears therefore that although the prompt relief in the purchase of Exchequer-bills given by the Bank did at the moment avert these calamitous consequences; still the danger of having such a large unfunded debt becomes strikingly obvious, by the Bank being obliged a few days since to come into the market a second time to prevent a further depreciation of them.

"That, notwithstanding the low rate of interest which has been paid on Exchequer-bills, it has been both inexpedient and dangerous to leave so large an amount of debt unfunded; not only for the reasons stated in the foregoing resolution, but because it might have been funded on most advantageous terms, and at a saving of some millions to the country, whilst by leaving it unfunded until a period of political difficulty arrives, it cannot fail seriously to affect public credit, and to impair the energies of the country; and that it appears therefore to this House, that it is highly expedient to reduce the unfunded debt within more reasonable limits."

These were the resolutions which he thought it expedient to propose in this part of his speech. But he considered it proper to state that, in his opinion, considerable error and mismanagement had prevailed upon another most important subject; namely, in respect of the general public debt. It was well known to every hon. gentleman who heard him, that there had been, some time ago, introduced into that House a measure of considerable notoriety respecting what was since known as "the dead weight." This had been upon parliament, Heaven knew! a dead weight ever since; and so long as the arrangement in question existed was likely to prove so. It had, from the first moment of its being proposed for their adoption, involved them all in considerable difficulty; and, if it were not removed, it could not fail to involve them still more. In 1822, a noble lord, now no more, had come down to the House and had declared, that it was impossible the country could be saved unless it possessed a clear sinking fund of 5,000,000*l.* [hear.]

He was stating these things with a view of showing how completely the country had been imposed upon. That plan for transferring the dead-weight was adopted by the vote of a large majority of the House. No sooner had the noble lord he was speaking of retired home, after carrying this measure, than he began to perceive—probably from its not having been greeted with all the cheers he had expected—that his financial schemes did not seem to be well relished by his hon. friends on the same side of the House; for they had anticipated a reduction in the malt tax of 2,000,000*l.* This dead-weight measure, which the noble lord assured the House was perfectly correct and expedient, was, in fact, a grant by government, or the public rather, of an annuity of 2,800,000*l.* for a term of 45 years. This loan, therefore, imposed a total debt upon the country of no less than 75,000,000*l.* [hear]. He was perfectly accurate in stating it at this amount; for, by returns which he held in his hand, the value of this annuity, now that it had a term of 41¼ years, to run was, according to the estimate of the most experienced accountants, 74,632,000*l.* The loan, therefore, which government, by reason of granting such annuity, might be said to have taken up, was undoubtedly the largest that had ever been raised in this country. In fourteen days after propounding and procuring the sanction of parliament to this plan, the government came down and said, that nothing could possibly save the country but a clear sinking fund of 5,000,000*l.* But inasmuch as only a fortnight before, the noble lord had held out precisely the same doctrine with regard to the dead-weight scheme, the government, in effect, by this latter proposal, violated their own recorded principles, and deserted their own plans. Great opposition was manifested to this measure, and, if he remembered rightly, the House divided upon it no less than twelve several times. Even in the very last stage of the measure, they went to a division upon it. His late lamented friend, the hon. member for Portarlington (Mr. Ricardo), strenuously argued against it; and every time it was proposed to be agitated, made a point of remaining in the House on purpose to oppose it. That gentleman, indeed, always predicted the very serious evils that must arise from it. It might be affirmed as to this dead weight, that the Bank did not advance the whole of the money necessary for its purchase. But the Bank certainly came forward, and did buy up an enormous amount. They purchased this dead-weight annuity up to the year 1828, and to the amount of 13,000,000*l.* having already advanced other 8,000,000*l.* upon other accounts. The whole measure was, in every respect, one of the most dangerous which had ever been resorted to; and not the less so, as to the connection of the Bank with it. The Bank might now say, probably, "what fools we were not to sell this amount when we could have parted with it." But he doubted much whether the Bank could ever re-sell any considerable portion of their purchase without, at all events, considerably alarming the country. Their advances had been enormous, and it would have had an injurious effect for them to have come into the money market, with a view of endeavouring to replace the capital they had, in this particular instance, expended. At no former period of that company's history, had they ever been under such immense advances upon security, without convertibility. For the question was not as to the amount of the securities it might hold, on these accounts, but as to their greater or less degree of convertibility. He much doubted whether the Bank ever could convert its share of this annuity. But, was this the only weight which now pressed upon that concern? By no means. They had advanced about 5,500,000*l.* upon deficiency-bills. It was admitted, moreover, in a recent speech of the right hon. gentleman opposite, that they had made advances upon Exchequer-bills to the extent of 7,000,000*l.* It was well known that they had also issued about 3,000,000*l.* to pay off the dissentients, under the operation of converting the fives into four per cents; and latterly they had issued 2,000,000*l.* more in order to keep the market price of Exchequer-bills at par. Taking one matter with another, the Bank had advanced altogether about 25,000,000*l.*; from which, deducting about five millions and a half for the deficiency bills, there would be a total of 20,000,000*l.*, in round numbers, advanced by the Bank to the government. Still, it would seem, that they had not had enough of advances; for, upon another scheme—that of loans upon mortgages—they had lent 1,400,000*l.* Now, from such extensive engagements, he would defy the Bank to disengage itself, without en-

tailing upon the country the most ruinous consequences. There was but one way in which it could be disenthralled, at all; and that was for the right hon. gentleman opposite to issue Exchequer-bills very largely. What would any hon. gentleman venture to predict of the effects on public credit that must follow upon the Bank beginning to unlade themselves either of their share of the dead weight, or of those other securities which he had mentioned? Those securities were not convertible within any such period of time as would be necessary to save the credit of the Bank, were it under a necessity of converting them. It was now altogether, it might be objected, a dangerous and inconvenient time to attempt any thing like such a conversion. But the way to disengage the Bank from this unfortunate bargain would be at once to annihilate the act of parliament which had granted, in the first instance, these most extraordinary, inconvenient, and dangerous means of raising money.

He now proceeded to advert to another topic of singular moment; he meant the account which had been rendered to parliament of the public debt of this country. The results given by that account were very different from those which really existed. The capital of that debt, he would undertake to say, was absolutely above 100,000,000*l*. more than the sum at which the government of the country had put it down. He by no means imputed this error in their statement, enormous as it was, to any improper motive, or to design on their part. After passing over in detail the various items of debt arising out of the 5, 4, 3½, and 3 per cents.—the account omitted altogether the debt due on the life annuities and the long annuities. On this very large proportion of the public debt, they had forgotten to put any value whatever; and, more especially, no account whatever was taken of that absurd and ruinous charge (a charge to which it was difficult for him to assign, with any degree of temper, a distinctive name) the dead-weight annuity. Now, by the government's own accountants the valuation of those charges had been elsewhere made; and the total amount, as upon these items, was nearly 101,000,000*l*.; and that amount, therefore, was to be taken in addition to the total sum of the national debt, as this had been officially held out to the country up to the present hour.—If this were so—if he was correct (and correct he contended that he was) in this statement—the interest of that debt must of course have been returned in the same erroneous way—and it was so returned. By a paper, which would be in the hands of every hon. member in a very few days, it would appear that the national debt, on the 5th of January 1819, was 832,000,000*l*. The debt as it now stood, notwithstanding our boasted sinking fund of 5,000,000*l*., and all the amount of our yearly taxation, was immoderately increased. For what was this total enlarged to in January 1826? As compared with what it was in 1819, it appeared, upon a return signed by Mr. Finlayson, the actuary at the National-Debt Office, and by Mr. Hyam, that there was an increase of 61,646,636*l*.; the life annuities being valued upon the same principles in both years, 1819 and 1826. Then, how stood the charge upon this statement? Why, at a sum of 31,395*l*. more at present than it was in 1819, seven years only having elapsed since that period. Thus the House would perceive we had an enlarged debt, and an enlarged interest—nearly 62,090,000*l*. more of capital, and upwards of 31,000*l*. more of charge, being the amount of the increase since January, 1819; and all this, notwithstanding government considered they had saved the country between 1,500,000*l*. and 1,600,000*l*. by the reduction of the five per cents to four per cents. Still he would ask, in spite of this last-named benefit, how came our condition to be no better? Had the right hon. gentleman afforded the country any intimation that such was the state of its debt? No: this statement had been kept altogether in the back ground. Figures proved facts; but hitherto these figures had not come to light. Let him not be told that this was not an accumulating debt; for that would be but to repeat what had been already too successfully done: it would be to throw dust in the eyes of all the country. And, certainly the right hon. gentleman, in the discharge of those duties with which these statements were connected, did appear to have been completely blinded by a deplorable fatuity. Year after year the country had been told that it would get out of debt. But when the paper he had alluded to should have been printed, every hon. member who would be at the pains of judging for himself, would perceive, that the measures of the government had retarded, almost beyond calculation, the

period at which, by any possibility, that anticipation could be realized. The Bank had been again recently called upon for a very considerable advance—and that advance to be made on a species of security which they could not, at pleasure, turn into money. Really, he was obliged to declare, that although hitherto the country bankers had been exceedingly blamed on all hands for their over-issues, the fact was, that his majesty's government had had more notes or bills out, than, if they had been suddenly called upon, they could by possibility have met; and that at one period, the Bank itself had had more notes out than, upon an emergency, it could have met. He did not mean to say that the Bank had a general over-issue of paper; but that abstractedly, and with reference to the premises he had stated, they had had such an over-issue. There even now remained a very large proportion of this dead-weight, as it was called, to sell. He should like to ask the right hon. gentleman, whom he proposed, in his own mind, as a purchaser for that remaining portion?—He had already filled the hands of the Bank of England. While he mentioned this fact, he thought he saw a smile upon the face of his hon. friend opposite, the Bank director, which seemed to say, that in truth the Bank had got enough of it. Would the right hon. gentleman proffer it to the South-Sea company? Whether or no the public would be disposed to buy it off his hands, it was perhaps not difficult to anticipate. Certain it was, that the hon. gentlemen who surrounded the chancellor of the Exchequer were never very strenuous in support of the original proposition. He had no wish to embarrass the right hon. gentleman; but he really would advise him to say to parliament, "We will do this act away altogether, we will come to our senses;—and for myself, I declare, that so long as I may have the honour of being a member of the government, never will I propose such another scheme as this, the mischiefs and danger of which I have seen so clearly." He did therefore strenuously advise him to get rid of the dead weight, by annihilating the act under which the arrangement for its transfer was effected; and further, to clear himself by funding Exchequer-bills. By that means alone could he meet the difficulties to which he was otherwise liable; for, in that case, come what might, he would find himself free to act; and surely it was the worst policy which any government could adopt, to allow its hands to be fettered in money matters of this nature, at the moment when perfect freedom of action might be most necessary. There would be no disgrace in the right hon. gentleman's abandoning such a measure as the dead weight. The only disgrace, after this night, would consist in his adhering to it. In regard to that measure, he repeated his conviction, that the right hon. gentleman never had the cordial support of many of his colleagues; and it was to be recollected that no former chancellor of the Exchequer had ever enjoyed the support of more able, more active, more intelligent, or more popular colleagues; or colleagues of more extensive practical information upon all matters connected with the political interests of the country. He did therefore hope and trust, that when the right hon. gentleman should come down to the House next Monday, he would declare to parliament that he would have no more to do with this measure, but would re-model it, and throw the charge accruing upon it on the sinking fund, or some other source of income. Such injurious arrangements, at once so dangerous and so inconvenient to the country, the right hon. gentleman should certainly take the earliest opportunity of recalling and abolishing. If the country should not be exposed to any new necessity for such a course of proceeding, there could be no danger in adopting it; but if it should be, in how much better a situation would she not be placed by reason of having adopted it? Connected with these concluding observations, he begged to submit the second part of his resolutions:

"That, although, by a vote of this House, five millions were declared necessary as a sinking fund to uphold public credit, by diminishing the national debt, yet, in the course of a very few days after that declaration, the House came to the determination of granting an annuity of 2,800,000*l.* for 45 years, thereby increasing the public debt many millions (by return to the House, March 1826, 74,632,051*l.*), and at the same time violating the very principle which it had declared to be the only one by which public credit could be supported.

"That part of the said annuity, amounting to 585,740*l.* for 44 years, was sold to the Bank of England for 13,089,424*l.*, payable by instalments, the last of which falls due in July, 1828, and part, amount-

ing to 2,214,200*l.* still remains unsold, to the value of nearly 50,000,000*l.*; and that, under present circumstances, it will be inexpedient to sell the remaining part of the said annuity, and that it will be expedient to repeal so much of the act granting the said annuity as relates to the part unsold, and to charge the amount necessary to defray the naval and military pensions from July, 1828, on the consolidated or sinking fund.

"That the capital of the funded unredeemed debt of the United Kingdom stood in the finance accounts, on the 5th of January, 1825, at 781,123,222*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.*, whereas, the real capital debt of the country approaches to nearly 900,000,000*l.* inasmuch as the capital of the terminable annuities is not included in the above sum."

Mr. *Herries* rose, and expressed his intention of detaining the House but for a short time in answering the observations of the hon. member for Abingdon. The hon. member had confined his speech to two points. In the first, he took a retrospective view of the conduct of government with respect to the unfunded debt; and in the other, he had alluded, with no small condemnation, to the manner in which the government had managed the funded debt. The hon. member had accused the government of confusion in making up the accounts of the funded debt. The confusion existed only in the ideas of the honourable member; and greater confusion than prevailed there he had never known. The hon. member, some time ago, had called for a paper, to show the state of the funded debt, which the House ordered to be produced. The hon. member had directed, that in that paper an estimate should be made of the total value of the annuity of 2,800,000*l.* set apart for providing for the charge of the military half-pay. This estimate was set down under last year's head alone, and the consequence was, that in that year, as compared with former years, there appeared an enormous difference in the amount of the funded debt. Upon this mistake, created by the hon. member himself, he had raised an argument as erroneous as its basis. The hon. member had charged the government with not having effected the reduction of the national debt. He begged to call the attention of the House to this subject. The bullion committee of 1819 recommended, that the unfunded debt should be reduced to the extent of 10,000,000*l.*; and he was able to show, that government had not only complied with that recommendation, but gone beyond it. From the time of the report of the bullion committee up to the present moment, government had discharged upwards of 13,000,000*l.* of the unfunded debt. In order to make the subject perfectly intelligible, it was necessary to explain the nature of the unfunded debt. It was divided into two parts. One part, consisting of Exchequer-bills, was called the unprovided debt; and the other part, existing merely by anticipation of the funds by which at a limited period it was to be discharged, was called the provided debt. When he spoke of the reduction of the unfunded debt, it would be understood that he alluded only to that part of it which was unprovided. To the unprovided debt, no addition had been made since the date of the report of the bullion committee; on the contrary, it had been made the subject of gradual reduction. On the 5th of January 1819, the unprovided debt stood at 19,480,000*l.*; on the 5th of January 1826, it stood at 6,139,000*l.* The chief reduction in the amount of this debt took place in the first three years after the recommendation of the bullion committee. In 1820, 1821, and 1822, it was reduced 10,000,000*l.*, and in 1823, and 1824, it was reduced 3,000,000*l.*, making a total reduction of 13,000,000*l.* Now, he asked the House, whether this perseverance in the gradual reduction of the amount of debt exhibited any inattention on the part of government to this important subject? The question raised by the hon. member was this—whether it would have been wiser for ministers to have funded the Exchequer-bills, or raised money to pay them off, or to have adopted those measures which had relieved the country from a portion of taxation, and enabled us to enter upon a more liberal system of commercial policy? It was impossible that government could have adopted both plans. If they had funded the Exchequer-bills, they would thereby have been prevented from pursuing the other advantageous measures to which he had alluded. They could not row two ways at once. Was there any thing in the state of the country which should have induced ministers to resort to the expedient of funding Exchequer-bills? The hon. member had indulged in some talk about government being overwhelmed

with Exchequer-bills, in consequence of their coming in as revenue. Now, what was the fact during the few last years Exchequer-bills had been at a premium? So great had been the demand for them, that an opportunity presented itself, which government would have been to blame to let pass, of reducing the interest on them. It was true that these securities had recently suffered a depreciation of value; but it was impossible that government could have anticipated the late convulsion. No person could be accused of a want of foresight in not providing against such a contingency. Ministers would, he was sure, have been censured for imprudence, if, instead of reducing the taxes, they had funded Exchequer-bills, at a period when the state of the market presented no inconsiderable difficulties to such a measure. The whole amount of unfunded debt at present out-standing in the hands of the Bank and the public might be called 30,500,000*l.* On the 5th of January, 1819, it was about 44,000,000*l.* For the sake of argument he would suppose that the whole of that sum had been funded in any year since 1817, to see the way in which that proceeding would have operated on the public interests. If that amount then, had been funded in 1818, the country would have incurred a burthen of 5,042,000*l.*; in 1819, the burthen on the country would have been 5,155,000*l.*; in 1820, the burthen would have been 5,302,000*l.*; in 1821, the burthen would have been 4,126,000*l.*; in 1822, 2,692,000*l.*; in 1823, 2,469,000*l.*; in 1824, 1,017,000*l.*; and in 1825, about half the last sum. Independently of any other considerations, the expense to which the country would have been put by the proceeding formed a reason for not resorting to the funding of the debt. With respect to all that the hon. member had said about the choakage or embarrassment of the Bank, owing to their transactions with government, he was sure it was completely fallacious. As a proof of this, he might mention, that when very lately the Bank found it necessary to make advances to the merchants, they did so unhesitatingly, and to a very considerable extent. He might take that opportunity of stating, that the Bank always, as far as came under his observation, employed its powers for the advantages of the public. He was convinced that on all occasions they were actuated by the most anxious regard for the welfare of the public. He had now stated all that seemed to be necessary in reply to the speech of the hon. member. The chancellor of the Exchequer would, in a few days, lay before the House a statement of his financial projects for the year, and he thought it would be extremely wrong for the House to pass a resolution three days previous to that statement, pledging itself to certain financial operations which could not be carried into execution for two years. For that reason, he must oppose the prospective resolution; and to adopt the retrospective one, would be to place on the Journals a censure on the conduct of ministers to which he could not consent.

Mr. *Baring* said, he fully concurred in what had fallen from the hon. gentleman, that it would not be proper to enter into any discussion upon the present occasion, which could have the effect of anticipating the statement of the chancellor of the Exchequer. For that statement the public were waiting with the utmost anxiety. The trade, the credit, and the circulation of the country, would depend, in a great measure, upon the disclosures of the right hon. gentleman, and he would regret if he should be drawn into it prematurely. The question they had now to consider was the unfunded debt. He fully agreed with the hon. gentleman, that it would be acting in rather an unusual way to place upon the Journals the long resolution proposed by the hon. member for Abingdon, until the House had first heard what the chancellor of the Exchequer meant to bring forward. He felt very anxious to know what were the intentions of the right hon. gentleman with respect to the unfunded debt; but as he would in all probability explain his views relative to it on Monday, it would be inconvenient to press him into it at present. If the House should be of opinion that the plans of the right hon. gentleman were such as ought not to be adopted, then would be the time for his hon. friend to come forward with his resolutions. With respect to the amount of unfunded debt, it might be too much or too little, at any particular time, according to circumstances. At one time, forty millions might circulate without inconvenience; while, at another time, it would be considerably too much. The propriety or impropriety, therefore, of any particular amount depended entirely upon circumstances. He differed entirely however from the hon. gentleman opposite

upon some part of the subject. It appeared to him, that it would have been prudent and proper to have funded part of it when the funds were at 95, particularly that part for the re-payment of which the public might be called upon at any time. The capital of 14,000,000*l.* due to the Bank, he should have thought it right to fund, thereby making it a permanent three per cent debt, and getting rid of the liability of being called upon to pay it in money, when it might be extremely inconvenient to do so, and when, to meet the demand, government might be under the necessity of funding at 65, an operation that must be attended with considerable loss. This was the more to be desired, inasmuch as the Bank charter would expire in a few years, when it would be necessary, either to pay this debt to the Bank, or to extend that charter. He did not mean, however, to deny that the government could pay it off at any time, without much difficulty. Independent of the debt to the Bank, he should be disposed to fund a large proportion of the unfunded debt. Had this been done when the funds were at 90 or 95, it would have been attended with considerable advantage. He could not clearly understand the reasoning of his hon. friend opposite. He did not see how it could have made a difference of 5,000,000*l.*, or any thing like it, to the public, if an unfunded debt of 30,000,000*l.* had, at any period since 1819, been converted into a funded debt. Taking the interest of the debt so funded at 3 or 3½ per cent, it could not make that difference. Though there might have been some trifling loss of interest, it would still have been an advantage to fund even at 93. Indeed, when stock fell to 75, it was easy to perceive that there would be great loss and inconvenience in funding. Favourable opportunities had occurred for funding all that part of the debt, to the immediate payment of which government was liable; and he thought they ought not to have been neglected. It might have been attended with some trifling loss; but a saving of one or two millions was nothing in comparison to the important consideration of placing the country in what he would call a sound state. That was the first great point to be considered; and the next, by a proper system of economy, to raise it to a moral, proud, and commanding station.—His hon. friend opposite seemed to have mistaken what had fallen from him upon a former occasion, in reference to the Bank. When he alluded to the choaked state of that establishment, in consequence of its dealings with government, and of other circumstances, he was comparing its present situation with what it was in 1793 and in 1797, when the Bank restriction took place. He then called the attention of the House to the embarrassments of the Bank at both these periods; and as his object was, to compare them with the present, he was justified in taking into consideration the deficiency-bills. They were a fair item to bring into the account; and, after all that had been said, the whole difference between him and his honourable friend opposite, consisted in the deficiency-bills. As to the money advanced on mortgages, though the circumstance was denied, the impression still on his mind was, that the measure was pressed on the Bank by government. What he was desirous, in a former debate, to press upon the attention of the House was, the inconvenience arising from the great amount of securities in the hands of the Bank that were not immediately convertible. The capital of such an establishment should always consist of securities easily convertible. Another point to which he had then alluded was, the advances made to dissentients, at the time the four per cents were reduced. The amount thus advanced would, no doubt, disappear in the course of no very long time, but that could not lessen the difficulties of the immediate pressure. After all the arguments that had been used by the hon. gentleman opposite, he had yet heard no version of the case which appeared to him to exculpate government from the charge of having brought the Bank into circumstances of difficulty. The hon. gentleman said, they were in no difficulty; that they were able and willing to come forward to assist the public. They did, it was true, come forward in the middle of December; but then it should be recollected, that they had been screwing up their circulation from the October previous, up to the 3rd of December. The fact was, that the whole history of the late calamity was written in figures as clearly as it could be written, and was as intelligible as any thing could be, to those who reflected on the circumstances. The story of the Bank was this. During the bubble period they had in circulation twenty-one millions of paper. This continued up to August in the same year, and the exchanges were

favourable. They then brought down their issues to 17,400,000*l*., at which it was in December. He would put it to the House, whether the Bank was not pressing, by this operation, upon all the banks in the country, for the purpose of relieving itself from the mass of choak with which it was embarrassed, in consequence of its dealings with government. Did the Bank then exhibit no symptoms of difficulty? They did, and the symptoms must have been perfectly apparent to any person at all acquainted with their usual course of proceeding. Immediately after, they raised their issues from 17,400,000*l*. to 26,000,000*l*. This was nothing less than sporting with the whole property of the country, for the difference of amount in the issues was, in fact, the barometer by which the value of all that property was regulated; and to this they were driven, in consequence of having their resources choaked up by government. He would not pretend to say to whom the blame was to be exclusively attributed, but the Bank and the government must divide it between them. The hon. gentleman opposite denied that the Bank had manifested any symptom of difficulty or distress. They were, however, selling Exchequer-bills; which was well known by every person acquainted with the subject, to be a most marked symptom of distress. But, said his hon. friend, they might sell Exchequer-bills; yes, certainly they might, but it was not the practice. They never did sell them. The custom was, to keep the Exchequer-bills by them, and while he was in the direction there was no instance of their having been sold. When anything of the kind was done, the inference immediately drawn from it by every person acquainted with the usual mode of doing business was, that the Bank was in difficulties. The circumstance of course, when it became known, excited great alarm. In fact, they had only a choice of difficulties. If they attempted to bring what was called the dead-weight into the market, it would have increased the alarm; and in that principally consisted the absurdity of this most extraordinary measure. The advances from the Bank at present, in consequence of this utterly useless and incomprehensible sort of arrangement was, 8,000,000*l*. and it would run up to 13,000,000*l*. if suffered to continue. If he might venture to suggest any step to the chancellor of the Exchequer, it would be to stop it where it was, and this might be done without inconvenience, as the price of stocks was now nearly the same as when the arrangement was first entered into. This would be taking off from the Bank a stock which it would be extremely difficult and inconvenient at any time for them to sell. When the government sold stock, the notes passed from one individual to another; but when the sale of stock was made by the Bank, the notes which came in were stopped and withdrawn from circulation, and an injury was thereby created. This was well known; and when the Bank sold, individuals gave a lower price for the stock. The dead-weight was the most perplexed, unintelligible operation he had ever heard of. The accounts connected with it were inexplicable; and when 5,000,000*l*. more were added to it, the thing would be still more perplexing. Even one of the ministers of the Crown had confessed, that he did not comprehend it: and he was right. He defied any person, however conversant with the intricacies of accounts, to unravel it. He could not perceive any beneficial effect produced by it. The half-pay and pensions, in place of being diminished, were rather on the increase. It would be much better at once to recognize them as part of the public expenditure of the country, and thus get rid of so much intricate and foolish calculation.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he did not feel it necessary to detain the House by making a long reply. As the subject was to be discussed on Monday, discussion now would tend to confuse the matter, as much as the papers moved for by the hon. member for Abingdon would confound the question to which they related. He had one or two remarks to make on the statement of the hon. member for Taunton, respecting the reduction of the unfunded debt, to satisfy the House that no blame was imputable to government. He conceived that he was not called upon to go into a review of the financial operations of the last ten years, and to inquire whether the government ought, at any given period, to have funded Exchequer-bills, and reduced the amount of the unfunded debt. He would say, however, that great efforts were made for that object. If the hon. gentleman had gone as far back as the year 1816, he would have found that on the 5th of

January of that year, the unfunded debt amounted to 61,000,000*l.*; and that on the 5th of January 1826, it amounted only to 31,000,000*l.*, having been, reduced nearly one half. The hon. gentleman might say that this was not a sufficient reduction; but it afforded some proof, at least, that the government had not been inattentive to the reduction of this debt. But the hon. gentleman, in alluding to the facilities of funding in the last three years, had not made a very fair representation. When the hon. gentleman stated, that the government had been guilty of great negligence in not funding in the year 1823, when the price of the funds was so favourable to such an operation, he entirely forgot what the value of stocks was in that year. The three per cents were not then, as the hon. gentleman imagined, at 90. In January 1823 they had not exceeded 75, and in April in the same year, they were at 74. It would have been, therefore, a most impolitic measure to have attempted to fund any part of the Exchequer-bills then. Then came the year 1824, when, as the hon. gentleman said, nothing was done. Now, in the first place, it was necessary to recollect, that the unfunded debt at that time fetched a very considerable premium in the market; and that being the case, it was not so easy a matter, as the hon. gentleman well knew, to fund Exchequer-bills. It was not to be expected that the holders of Exchequer-bills, who had a premium of 60*s.* or 80*s.* per cent, would give up that advantage, unless upon very liberal terms being held out to them. To fund Exchequer-bills, under such circumstances, would be impolitic in the extreme. The hon. member for Aberdeen would not have acceded to so improvident a plan. His economical spirit would have been roused in all its usual vigour, and he would have lashed the administration with more severity than on any former occasion. In the year 1824, it would have been most inconsistent in him to have been funding Exchequer-bills when he was preparing to reduce the 4 per cents. That measure might have been unwise and improper; but it would have been a manifest inconsistency to do any act which would lower the funds, when the measure itself was grounded on the actual state of the funds. The subject of the deficiency-bills, to which allusion had been made, was, perhaps, not well understood by the House. The nature of those bills was this:— There was a certain portion of the current expenses of the country payable at the end of every quarter. These payments were charged on the consolidated fund, the guarantee of the public creditor, and composed of the aggregate of almost all the taxes. These taxes were paid into the Exchequer from day to day, and greatly exceeded the amount of the charge. The total amount was about 45,000,000*l.*; the charge was about 35,000,000*l.* The difference between the charge and the total amount was applicable to the payment of the annual supplies. But only a proportion of it was applied each quarter; and the greater part of the charge did not accrue till the end of the quarter. If no use was made of the money, it was formerly paid into the Bank; but of late years it had been deemed advisable, that the public should have the benefit of the employment of their own money. Hence there was a diminution, at the end of every quarter, of the amount of money applicable to the payment of dividends then accruing; and this called for an advance from the Bank to the amount of the difference. This advance was made on the credit of Exchequer-bills; and such was the history of the deficiency-bills. But in 1823, the receipts of the revenue had so increased, that there was scarcely any necessity for these deficiency-bills, for all demands upon the Exchequer were promptly met. In 1824, it appeared that it would be desirable to apply 4,000,000*l.* of the growing produce of the revenue to the reduction of the permanent unfunded debt. This measure, when proposed to the House, was approved; the hon. members for Aberdeen and for Abingdon, joining in that approval. Then, in October 1824, one million had been appropriated to this object; in March 1825, another million; in June 1825, another million, besides 3,000,000*l.* paid to the public creditor; so that, since October 1824, the debt had been reduced 6,000,000*l.* But for these payments made to the public, the deficiency-bills on the 5th January 1826, would have been almost nothing. So that the hon. member for Abingdon was not justified in charging ministers with neglect and incapacity in relation to this matter. If he thought the financial concerns of the country had been mismanaged, he (the chancellor of the Exchequer) was surprised that he did not bring the subject to the test, by laying

the question fairly before the House. If the hon. member brought these sweeping charges forward, if they were well founded, he (the chancellor of the Exchequer) was perfectly unfit to retain his situation; and if the House should come to that conclusion, he should not be so very much distressed as some hon. gentlemen appeared to think. He was not so delighted with the duties of office as to feel any very vehement uneasiness at being relieved from them; but he did wish the charges of utter incapacity to be brought forward fairly and directly; and not in the shape of an amendment to a motion with which such a fact had nothing to do. Certainly, it was competent to the hon. gentleman to take the course which he had taken; but, as the resolution proposed involved such a direct censure upon his conduct, as, if carried, to make it impossible for him to discharge his duties with comfort to himself or advantage to the country, he did wish that the hon. gentleman, if he thought the censure merited, had conveyed it in a less roundabout way. As it was, he should be extremely mortified if the House disposed of the question upon the point of form; and would much rather at once go into the merits. If the House should be of opinion, that his incapacity was obvious, he could no longer be fit to be a finance minister. If such was the opinion of the House, hon. members were bound in duty to declare it; and he should endeavour to submit thereto, with the best grace that he might be able.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the observations of the right hon. gentleman had not at all met the statements of his hon. friend, the member for Abingdon. His hon. friend's accounts had been characterized as confused and fallacious; but none of the fallacy or confusion had as yet been proved. Now, if a man, calculating the full extent of all he owed in the world in the year 1819, found it amount to 20,000*l*., and, after applying a sinking fund for six years to liquidate it, found it then amount to 22,000*l*. the inference would be, that he had lost 2,000*l*. by his liquidating operation. Then, what would be true as to the debts of an individual, must be equally true as regarded the debts of a nation. And let the House observe the course of calculation which had been taken by his hon. friend. On the 5th of January 1819, the whole debt of the country, as valued by the public accountant, amounted, in present money, to 832,136,445*l*. That sum, in currency, would have cleared the kingdom from the principal of all debt; and the yearly amount of interest paid was 29,144,361*l*. Now, how was our situation when our sinking fund had been seven years at work—in 1826? Why, we had had an increase of revenue over expenditure to the extent of 19,000,000*l*. This was exclusive of a sum of 500,000*l*. received from the East India Company, and another sum from Austria of more than 2,000,000*l*.; and yet the value of the whole amount of our debt was now 893,783,282*l*., being an increase, as regarded principal, of 61,646,837*l*.; and the interest which we paid was 29,176,000*l*. being an advance of about 31,000*l*. a year over the former period. Well, then, where was our surplus of revenue, 19,000,000*l*.? Where was the money that had been borrowed? It was all lost. These were the advantages of the sinking fund! In the year 1819, when our taxes had been increased 3,000,000*l*. to support that common delusion, the country had been told that, upon calculation, if it were maintained and held sacred, it would, in ten years, reduce 70,000,000*l*. of the debt; instead of this, its operation during seven years had been to add to the debt considerably. The right hon. gentleman spoke of fallacy and confusion; but it was the fallacious system upon which this fund proceeded—the buying with the right hand, and selling with the left—that threw the whole accounts of the country into a state in which it was almost impossible to comprehend them. In the year 1822 a loan had been contracted for with the Bank of 13,000,000*l*., in which we had given 100*l*. 3 per cent stock, for every 73*l*. 5*s*. in money that we received. What followed? The commissioners of the sinking fund carried this 73*l*. 5*s*. into the market, and bought stock, paying 90*l*., 95*l*., and even 100*l*. for that which we had sold for the 73*l*. 5*s*. Here was a loss of no less than 15 per cent. upon the average, upon the sum paid up, which was 8,000,000*l*. The whole system was one which called for change in the manner of making up the accounts of it. In the year 1817, our taxes had been 57,000,000*l*. and our expenditure 58,000,000*l*.; but, from that time down to the present, the excess of income had been regular. In the seven years, our aggregate surplus had been 19,000,000*l*. He asked again, what had

become of it? It was lost—muddled away—it had disappeared. The only real source of a sinking fund—the only legitimate source—was surplus revenue. Within the last seven years, our surplus of revenue had been 19,000,000*l.*; and the commissioners of the sinking fund had bought and sold, and transferred and re-transferred, stock within that time, to the amount of 117,000,000*l.* He now came to the manner in which the unfunded debt of the country was managed, which was just as satisfactory as the rest of the affair. The right hon. gentlemen opposite said much of the mischief which the issues of the Bank paper had done to the country. How came it that they said nothing of their own excessive issues of Exchequer-bills, which had done ten times more towards deranging the money market, and producing the causes which had led to the late distress? In 1817, they had had 49,000,000*l.* of Exchequer-bills out. In 1818, they had issued 12,000,000*l.* more. In 1819, the amount of outstanding Exchequer-bills was 48,000,000*l.*, the rest having been paid off in the interim. It was true, that since the repeal of Mr. Peel's bill, the amount had been gradually decreasing; but from 1817 to 1819, the government had been borrowing twelve millions when there was no necessity for it. It had been decreasing since that period; but he still contended, that it would have been of advantage to have funded the floating debt in 1825. He had urged it then, and he urged it now. If that course were not approved of, could they not be paid off with the sinking fund? Having concurred so far with his hon. friend, he should observe, that it would perhaps have been better for him to have brought some specific charge, than have proceeded in the manner he had done. He should, however, second him, if his hon. friend intended to press his motion.

Mr. *Maberly* said, that having heard what he had, he should not press the motion to a division.

The amendment was then put, and negatived.

EVACUATION OF SPAIN BY THE FRENCH.] Sir *R. Wilson*, seeing the right hon. Secretary for Foreign Affairs in his place, would take the opportunity of asking a question which concerned the honour, the interest, and, ultimately, the security of the country. Last year, the right hon. gentleman, in answer to a question of a similar nature, had stated, that the French troops would evacuate Spain before those of Austria quitted Naples. Another year had passed, and there did not seem to be any likelihood of the Spanish government being left to itself. He trusted that the right hon. gentleman would tell them whether any thing had taken place that would lead to the evacuation of Cadiz, and the other fortresses held by the French troops.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* felt ready to give the hon. member for Southwark every satisfaction in his power; but he must be aware that it was unlikely for him to have any particular information as to time. He had not, however, the least hesitation in saying, that the hon. member himself could not be more anxious to see the French army out of Spain than was the French government to withdraw it. It had unfortunately happened that several partial attacks had been made upon the established order of things in Spain, which had been equally mischievous, useless, and unprofitable. This had obliged the French troops to be kept there longer than was originally intended; but he was completely convinced, that the French government were as anxious to withdraw their troops from Spain as the hon. member was that they should be so withdrawn.

ARMY EXTRAORDINARIES—MISCELLANEOUS ESTIMATES, &c.] The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, Mr. Herries moved, "That 376,769*l.* be granted for the Commissariat Department for the year 1826,"

Mr. *Hume* complained, that this charge was annually increasing. In 1822 it had been lowered, but since that, the House had retrograded; and they had now absolutely come back to a charge as great as that of 1821. But this applied equally to every branch connected with the army. In consequence of reductions that were made in the army in 1821 and 1822, the House had allowed the pension-list to be increased to the amount of at least 500,000*l.* They thought the reduction would be a permanent one. But they now found out their error.. The country was worse off at present than it was at the time when the pension-list was augmented, because other persons were appointed in the room of those who were pensioned off. The country had, therefore, double the num-

ber of individuals to provide for. The persons employed in Canada, at the Cape of Good Hope, and in various other settlements, as commissariat officers, were unnecessarily numerous. And he would repeat, that such a military establishment as was now kept up, tracing it through all its ramifications, was sufficient to ruin any country, however wealthy. In Ireland there was, he observed, a corps of waggoners, or a waggon department, which cost a large sum annually. It appeared to him to be a most useless establishment; and before he went further, he should like to have some information relative to it.

Mr. *Herries* said, that the difference of the expenditure in the commissariat department, between the present and the preceding year, arose almost entirely from the increased price of provisions; bread, meat, and forage, had all advanced in price during the last two years. The expenditure in this department for 1825 was considerably beyond that of the three preceding years. The sum voted for that year did not cover the expense; and the estimate of the present year was formed on the actual expense incurred in 1825. As to the commissariat staff on foreign stations, particularly at Canada and the Cape, the number was not greater than the business required. By reducing the number, they would incur an additional expense, instead of effecting a saving. Every reduction that could possibly be made in this department had been made. But it should be observed, that various duties connected with the disbursement of money for the service of government were performed by the officers of this department; which, if not executed by them, must be performed by others; and this circumstance, he conceived, would satisfactorily account for the increase to which the hon. member had adverted. The number had, at one time, been considerably reduced: but in consequence of a representation from the commander of the forces, backed by many individuals perfectly qualified to give advice on this subject, it was thought proper to increase this useful body. It was not, however, brought back to its former amount, but was so far enlarged as to make it sufficient for the performance of all its duties. Those duties were various and important. In Canada a larger number were necessary than elsewhere, on account of the out-stations; and at times they had the charge of considerable sums of the public money. The number required at Sierra Leone was owing to a most melancholy cause. Two months after an officer arrived there, his death was almost certain; so that it was necessary to despatch double numbers, in order to supply inevitable vacancies.

Mr. *Hutchinson* begged to call the serious attention of ministers to this subject. The declaration of the Secretary to the Treasury was, that in consequence of the certain mortality at Sierra Leone, it was necessary to send out two officers to each appointment. He was quite aware of the value of colonies to a great empire; but surely Great Britain had foreign possessions enough, without clinging with such pertinacity to a settlement which was the destruction of all the British subjects sent out to it. It seemed to him quite abominable, that an hon. gentleman, himself high in office, and surrounded by the king's ministers, should venture to make a statement, which only showed that government was actuated by little less than infatuation, in thus despatching men to their graves on the coast of Africa. He spoke from no impulse of opposition, but from a strong feeling of humanity, and a desire to save the valuable lives of the king's subjects. Ministers would have to account to God and their country, for this wanton waste of human existence. If Sierra Leone could not be abandoned without serious detriment, there might be some excuse for keeping it. He called upon ministers to give some hope that this fatal colony would be relinquished, and left to the possession of the deadly maladies by which it was infested.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, that any person who believed the colony in question to be preserved in consequence of an abstract love of colonization, took a very narrow view of the question. It should be recollected, that the possession of this colony was connected with one of the most solemn acts ever agreed to by parliament. It ought to be recollected that the possession of this colony was considered essential to the carrying into effect that great and most humane object, the abolition of negro slavery. If they gave up that place to-morrow, they would undo much of what they had previously done for the purpose of destroying the traffic in slaves. Let it not be forgotten, that there were at the present moment 18,000 liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. He regretted as much as any man the loss

of lives in that colony; but surely it would require the full consideration of that House before they agreed to its utter abandonment. A commission had been sent out there; and when the report of that commission was made, it would be time enough to decide on the course which ought to be pursued with respect to this colony. Certainly, a committee of supply was not the place in which this question could be fairly discussed. Before a few months had elapsed, full information would be received relative to Sierra Leone, and until that period arrived, he thought the question of its abandonment ought not to be discussed.

Mr. *Bernal* said, that there were two questions connected with Sierra Leone; first, as to the trade that could be carried on there; and next, whether, if that place were abandoned, another situation could be found equally well calculated for checking the slave trade; Fernando Po, for instance. At present, an enormous expense was incurred by this country in its endeavours to put an end to that traffic; and he was sorry to say, that though this government was actuated by a sincere feeling to do away with the slave-trade, it was carried on by foreign powers, under circumstances of accumulated horror and oppression. If he were rightly informed, the representations made to the French government by the British ambassador at Paris on this subject, did not meet with that attention which they deserved. Here they were, year after year, expending large sums of money, and devising what appeared to be the best means for suppressing the slave-trade; and what happened after all their exertions? Why, they found that trade carried on, without regulation and without mitigation, by those very powers who had been paid to give it up. In fact, all their efforts appeared to have given silent encouragement to this shameful trade.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* assured the House, that there had appeared, on the part of the French government, a sincere desire to carry into effect the provisions which had been entered into, and the assurances which had been given, relative to the abolition of the slave trade. He begged leave to state one fact, as a proof of the sincerity of the French government. About a fortnight ago information had been received that slave-ships were then fitting out at Nantes. The fact was brought home decidedly, and the consequence was, that one of the ships was seized. Now, if the French government permitted the seizure of one of the vessels of that country under such circumstances, he thought little doubt could be entertained of their sincerity. They would not, he was sure, hereafter, abet other nations in carrying on this traffic. He had further to state, that this government, after considerable importunity, and after encountering and overcoming no little difficulty, had procured an order from the Spanish government, addressed to the governor of Cuba, which, if properly executed, would leave nothing to be desired, with respect to the slave-trade so far as Spain was concerned.

Mr. *Evans* said, that they heard much of the loss and waste of human life at Sierra Leone in preventing slavery; but there was no mention at all of the excessive waste of life incurred in supporting slavery in the West Indies.

Mr. *Hume* said, that they had the evidence of sir G. Collier, and all the practical men who had been there, to show that the situation of Sierra Leone was one which was not at all adapted to the humane purpose of the abolitionists. Messrs. Macaulay and Co. had made a bad choice of their head-quarters. It would turn out that they had effected the reverse of their intentions. There was no hope of improving, much less of civilizing Africa by that settlement. They had the evidence of major Laing, who had gone fifty miles into the interior only two years ago; he asserted that he was the first European ever seen so far in the country. The uselessness of a colony which had cost 1,800,000*l.* and could not yet grow enough produce to support its inhabitants, must be plain to every body. The black settlers were almost as ignorant as ever. The difficulty of getting up to the place was so great, as to preclude any hope of lasting usefulness. Ships took six weeks in working up to Sierra Leone.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* believed that no measure—not even a blockade through the whole line of coast—could effect the abolition of the trade, so long as slavery existed. He did not think that the hon. member for Aberdeen stated the subject fairly by putting it in comparative views of expense. It might be unprofitable to keep an establishment at Sierra Leone, but the question was as to its usefulness. In this view there could be no doubt in any mind after duly considering the cir-

cumstances. The government were in possession of many interesting particulars, which threw still clearer light on the subject. For instance, an expedition had been planned and put in motion for penetrating to the centre of Africa. It would proceed by the route along which the chief part of all the captives to be sold were driven to the coast. The House would see, in this one circumstance, the grounds of considerable hopes as to the civilization of Africa, though the expectation of any very great success was still very far remote.

Mr. *Sykes* could not say whether his hon. friend included him in the firm of Macauley and Co. but he could assure him, that he agreed with them as to the necessity of putting an end to slavery. It was on the recommendation of Mr. Wilberforce that this colony was first established, and such a measure could only have been suggested by the most praiseworthy motives. In exclaiming against the expense and loss of lives in this colony, it was singular that no allusion was made to other colonies liable to the same objection, established to continue the slave trade. What had been the state of our own colonies in the West Indies? In 1796, when a large force was sent to the West Indies, almost one half of the soldiers, at least of the officers, had died. He certainly lamented that mortality, as well as that of Sierra Leone; but, considering the latter station as settled for purposes of the highest benevolence, he could not refuse to vote for this item of expenditure.

Mr. *Carus Wilson* would not say whether Sierra Leone was the best situation that could have been chosen; but the experiment had at least proved, that persons of the African race and colour might be brought into a state of social and civilized life. This, under all the circumstances, was an important fact established; and he had no hesitation in voting for the grant.

The resolution was agreed to. On the resolution, that 72,680*l.* be granted for the contingent expenses of the Offices of the Secretaries of State,

Mr. *Hume* wished to know why there was an increase in these estimates for the present year.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, it was owing to various expenses necessarily incurred by the increase of business in the foreign and colonial offices particularly. The salary of the colonial counsel was increased from 600*l.* to 1,500*l.* because, from the increased business, his whole time was occupied. Besides, there was a considerable expense incurred by the preparation of documents ordered by parliament.

Mr. *Hume* took that opportunity of denying that the increased expense was incurred in preparing returns by order of this House; but the fact was, that the government kept governors at the Cape of Good Hope and other colonies, against whom so many complaints were made, that nearly the whole time of the persons engaged in the colonial departments was occupied in examining those complaints. The only way to save that expense would be, to call home every governor, whatever might be his rank or family, against whom complaints had been frequently made.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, that nothing could be more easy for the hon. gentleman than to make such declarations, and nothing more easy for himself than to say, that there was not in that declaration a word of truth. He could not concur in the opinion of the hon. member, that every governor against whom complaint might be made, ought to be turned off at once. He thought the proper course would be, when a complaint was made, to institute inquiry; and such inquiries had, upon many occasions, been instituted. Was it likely that any member of his majesty's government, liable as they were to public opinion, and the opinion of parliament, would wish to support a governor, who had by misconduct forfeited the confidence of the country? He did not stand up to justify the conduct of governors, or to say that no governor had done any thing which would justify inquiry, or perhaps removal, but he thought no government would be justified in removing a governor, in consequence of complaints which might be made against him, without having previously instituted an inquiry; and he was ready to admit that the inquiry ought to take place as soon as the nature of the circumstances would admit. Were there not proceedings now pending of that very nature? He denied that any unnecessary expense had been incurred in the government of the colonies. When the committee considered that we had no less than thirty-four scattered up and down in different parts of the world, they would be convinced that no small expense must be in-

curred in transacting the multifarious business connected with them. If the hon. member would make any specific charge, or point out any abuse in a tangible shape, he was ready to meet him. The hon. member never made his charges in a statesman-like manner, but was constantly finding fault with this item, and that item, without giving any one good reason for making it less. If he would pay the least attention to the subject, he must be convinced that the expense was not greater than it ought to be. Besides the increased business in the colonial department connected with slavery, there had been an increase in many other departments. He would state one fact. In 1806, when the last under secretary was appointed, fourteen folio pages of papers relating to the colonies were laid on the table; whereas last year there had been no less than 2,007, and the expense alone of printing, cost 4,000*l.* He was always disposed to furnish any information required by any hon. member; but then he thought it unfair to impute extravagance to the department, in consequence of expenses incurred in obedience to the vote of parliament. When he was upon this point on a former night, he might have alluded rather too personally to the hon. member; but he thought himself bound to vindicate the conduct of the department with which he had the honour of being connected; and he could now assure the House, that in consequence of the great extent of our colonies, the duty of the department had so increased that every individual employed in it was constantly occupied.

Mr. *Hume* replied, that he was unjustly accused of indulging in sweeping charges. How often had he called for inquiry respecting the Ionian Islands? And, for the last five years, had he not pressed on the government the necessity of instituting investigations respecting the Cape of Good Hope? But, what did the government do? Instead of taking the part of the colonists, and listening to their complaints, they always took part with the governors against the colonists. He was not for the dismission of any man from office without inquiry; but when complaints were made, and in a manner that merited attention, he would have the government institute inquiry, and act decidedly on the result of such inquiry.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* admitted that every well-founded complaint ought to be entertained by the government. But he expected the hon. gentleman no less to agree with him in the general principle, that they ought not to hold out invitations, as it were, to all discontented colonists to come home and exhibit charges against their governors. This would be a system of action which would discourage all honourable men from accepting such situations. The mean between the two extremes of apathy and rashness was to be attended to by government; and the hon. gentleman did not much clear himself from the accusation of bringing sweeping charges, when he intimated, that ministers were always disposed to support the governors against the colonists. In the particular instance to which allusions had been made, inquiries had been for some time in progress; and he trusted that the House would be ready to attend to the results of such investigations with impartiality. He hoped it was not to be assumed, because an individual was under accusation, that such fact was to be deemed proof of the accusation being just, and the party necessarily guilty.

The resolution was agreed to.

MUTINY BILL — PUNISHMENT OF FLOGGING IN THE ARMY.] The House having resolved itself into a committee on the Mutiny bill,

Mr. *Hume* rose for the purpose of submitting a clause for the abolition of a practice which had long existed in the army of this country—he meant the punishment of flogging the soldiery. He was aware that on this occasion he should have to encounter the prejudices of many hon. members who were officers in the army, and who, from being in the habit of witnessing such punishments frequently, did not entertain the same feelings of the propriety of its abolition that might be supposed to actuate other men. However; he did hope that they would give the subject a calm consideration, and if it should be made to appear that any other mode of punishment would be equally effectual, that they would consent to its abolition. The evil of flogging did not consist merely in the bodily torture inflicted on the individual who was thus punished; it had also the bad effect of rendering those who were obliged to witness such scenes more callous and indifferent to their duties than before. It had precisely this effect upon the persons punished; and he might appeal to the ex-

perience of those most acquainted with the army for the fact, that no man ever became a more diligent or a better soldier by the punishment of the whip. He was aware that a difference of opinion existed among many most respectable members of the military profession, on the subject of corporal punishment, and that many very humane individuals thought that the duty of the army could not be carried on without it; but he was happy to add, that there were also many highly distinguished officers who were of a different opinion, and who thought that, considering the modern improvements in the system of military discipline, corporal punishment might be dispensed with, not only without injury, but with great advantage to the service. He might, if he were disposed to go into detail, give many instances in illustration of his position, but he would confine himself to the mention of a few facts. In the Wurtemberg army, under the government of the late king, a system of discipline of a most severe and cruel kind had been carried on; but on the accession of the present king, an end was put to that system, and he had been informed by an officer that under the old system the men became worse by flogging; but the moment the punishment of the lash was abolished, so far from there being an increase of crime, the soldiers seemed to emulate with one another in avoiding every kind of punishment. He might be asked, if flogging were abolished, what kind of punishment ought to be substituted? He did not know what was the particular practice of the French army in this respect, though he was informed that in several regiments in that service flogging was not practised; but he would state that in Wurtemberg there were two regiments to which men were draughted who had been punished twice or more in their own regiments. Another regiment was appointed to receive those who had been punished only once. This system, which made it disgraceful for a man to be punished even slightly, and therefore unfit to remain longer in the same regiment with his former associates in arms, was, he was informed, found quite effectual in keeping up the discipline of the army in that country. Was it not, then, worth while that some attempt of the kind should be made with respect to our army, whose general system in other respects, and in that of flogging also, had been considerably improved? Adverting to the alterations which, so creditably to himself, had been proposed in our criminal code by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and considering the intended amelioration of the system practised towards our colonial negroes, which had been mentioned by the hon. colonial secretary, was it not monstrous that we should still keep Englishmen in constant fear of the lash, and hold that they could be kept to their duty only by that cruel species of punishment? The House were told that the whip, as a stimulus to labour, was to be discontinued in our West-India colonies. Upon what principle was it that it should not also be withdrawn as a punishment from our own fellow-citizens? Never did a better opportunity occur for giving the subject a fair trial than the present. We were now in a time of profound peace, and no danger could arise to the general discipline of our army from making the trial. He was not disposed to carry the experiment too far at first; and therefore, in the resolution which he would submit, he would limit the suppression of flogging to regiments in the United Kingdom. In the colonies, the present system might be continued until it was ascertained how far the suppression could be made effectual at home. He would also limit his resolution to a time of peace, so that if a war were to break out unexpectedly, resort might be had to the old system, if necessary. Thus no possible danger could occur from the trial. From every thing which was now passing around us; from the improvements about to take place in our criminal code at home; from the change contemplated in the condition of our colonial slaves, he thought the time was arrived when an end should be put to all those cruel exhibitions of corporal punishment, which tended only to harrow the feelings of those who witnessed them, without being effectual in reforming the unhappy persons who were thus punished. Humanity called upon us to make the trial, and there could, he thought, be little doubt that it would be successful. At all events, now was the time when it could be made with the least risk of danger. He would submit two resolutions on this subject. The first would go to the abolition of flogging; and by the second another mode of punishment would be proposed for crimes to which flogging was now applied. The first resolution

was to this effect:—"And be it farther enacted, that from and after the passing of this act, it shall not be lawful to punish any soldier in the United Kingdom, in time of peace, by the infliction of any lash or stripe, any usage or practice heretofore to the contrary notwithstanding." The second resolution was, "And be it further enacted, that if any soldier shall be convicted of petty thefts, or frequent desertions, or other crimes heretofore punishable by flogging, it shall be in the power of his majesty, and he is hereby empowered, to transfer the services of such soldier to any regiment serving in Africa, or any other of his majesty's foreign possessions." [A member here observed, that his majesty already possessed the power mentioned in the second clause.] Well, then, the second clause would be unnecessary, but the principle of the first was not affected by that fact. The House was not without an example of the abolition of flogging in a country, without being productive of any dangerous effect upon the military discipline of that country. In America, the punishment of flogging was abolished, and that, too, at a time when she was engaged in a war. On the 16th of May 1812, a clause was introduced into a bill then before congress, enacting, that so much of the law theretofore in force, as authorized the punishment of any soldier by any lashes or stripes, should be repealed. This was carried, and in a time of war, without producing any bad effect in the discipline of their army. On the contrary that discipline was kept up in a more effectual manner than before.

Mr. *J. Smith* said, that he did not think the present moment a proper one for the discussion of a question of such vast importance. The principle of the resolutions he concurred in to its full extent, and would continue to support, as long as he had a seat in that House. But he did think that, instead of being thus introduced, the question should be made the subject of a specific motion, as it had been when formerly introduced by an hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett), whom he did not then see in his place, and to whose humane exertions might be attributed the improvement which had already been made in our military discipline on this point. If a specific motion were made on the subject, the whole of the facts connected with it might be brought before the House in detail; and then he thought it would be made apparent, that throughout the whole of Europe there was a gradual abandonment of cruel bodily punishments; and he believed it would be seen, that England was now almost the only civilized government, under which this species of torture was inflicted—at least that we had not made the same progress as other nations in its abolition. He did not intend at that late hour to enter into any lengthened statements on this subject, to which he might be disposed if the subjects were brought more fully before the House. He would, however, mention one of many cases within his knowledge. He was acquainted with an officer who had, for a considerable time, the command of a troop of dragoons, and who, during the whole period of their being under his orders, never brought a man to corporal punishment. The only punishment inflicted on any of them, was confinement of a few days. This gentleman was one who had the command of his temper and passions—who watched his men narrowly, and thus became acquainted with their habits and dispositions; and, so effective was his adaptation of even the slight punishment he had mentioned, that on an inspection by a general officer, that troop received great praise for its discipline and good conduct, while other troops towards whom a more rigorous system had been applied, were censured for deficiency in both. But examples of this kind would be endless. It was admitted by officers of all ranks, that the soldier who was once brought to the halbert, was more likely to be brought to it a second time, than he who had never been subjected to that disgraceful punishment. This general principle was not applicable to the army only. In the history of the proceedings at the Old Bailey it would be found, that those who were once subjected to corporal punishment by the whip were in general found to be subjected to it a second time. Then if this practice was not found effectual for reform, which ought to be the object of every species of punishment less than capital, was not the legislature bound to abolish it, and substitute one more effectual? It was pretty well known, that by such public exhibition of severe corporal punishments, the feelings of the spectators became enlisted on the side of the sufferer, and that in their compassion for the man they lost all recollection of his crime. He agreed with the hon. member, that the

present was peculiarly favourable for an alteration in our code of punishment, and particularly for the abolition of military flogging. All the other nations of Europe were rapidly getting rid of their systems of bodily torture. He did not know the extent to which France had carried her improvements in military discipline on this point; but there was no question that her general code of corporal punishments had been most beneficially altered. Would she now tolerate such tortures as those inflicted on Ravillaç and Damien? They had, he thought, seen too much of the infliction of cruelties to be disposed ever to wish for their revival. He had, not very long back, witnessed many disgraceful and cruel exhibitions of men publicly whipped at the cart's tail through the streets. Such disgusting scenes were now in a great measure discontinued, and he hoped that the Secretary for the Home Department, who had undertaken the greatest and most important work which had ever occupied the attention of a statesman—that of effecting a reform in our criminal code—would apply his intelligent mind to the consideration of the important question, how far severe corporal punishments were effectual for the prevention of crime? He repeated his regret, that this question had not been made the subject of a specific motion. If it had, he could state many instances of officers who would be prepared to give it as their opinion, that when the system of severe punishment was more practised than it was at present, it invariably happened that the battalions in which the most men were punished were the least efficient. Whatever might be the result of the motion, he did hope that if he lived five years longer, he should see an end put to this system altogether. It was said, that a man who was made a slave lost half his merits; and it might be added, that the soldier who was flogged lost all.

Sir *R. Fergusson* suggested, that the chairman should report progress, and the hon. member might bring on his motion at a future day, on bringing up the report.

Sir *J. Brydges* gave his entire concurrence to the resolutions; because he was convinced that the system of flogging in the army was improper, and ought to be abolished. It was improper, because every man knew that honour was the essence of a soldier's profession; and when he was disgraced, by being subjected to such punishment, he considered his honour tarnished, and was no longer capable of any heroic feeling. He also objected to it, because it did not answer the end designed; for it left the soldier dejected and callous, and generally almost incapable of future improvement. In the present improved situation of the army, flogging might be done away with, without the slightest risk of danger to the service. He therefore entreated the committee to accede to the proposition, and grant that boon to the army which its invaluable services so well merited.

Sir *G. Murray* thought it rather unfair in the hon. member for Aberdeen to charge officers with want of feeling, because they were frequently obliged to witness the infliction of corporal punishments. No class of men, he would assert, were more alive to feelings of compassion. He did not deny the statement of the hon. member (Mr. J. Smith), that such feelings as he had described might be called forth from a mob witnessing a punishment. It was impossible not to have feelings of compassion, in seeing a fellow-man suffer; but it was one thing to have those feelings, and another to legislate on them. It would be inconsistent with sound policy to legislate on such feelings alone; and, in looking to military punishment, it should be considered whether the discipline of the army could be kept up without them. He was no friend to severe punishment of any kind; but he did think that the power of inflicting corporal punishment was necessary to the discipline of an army. He knew of no instance of any army, ancient or modern, without similar punishments. They were in use in the Roman army, and it would not be denied that they were kept in the highest state of discipline. It was not a fact, as the hon. member had stated, that the punishment of flogging was altogether abolished in America. But suppose it were so, what comparison was there between an army of 6,000 men, scattered over the immense surface of that country, and the extensive army kept up in this? The regulations of the two armies might be extremely different, and, at the same time, be applicable to the circumstances of the country. America did not want a standing army. What power would invade America? Her power was derived from a force of another description, and the state of discipline of her troops would

be wholly inapplicable to this country. With respect to the army in France, he could say nothing of the system now kept up; but it was well known that before the present dynasty returned to the throne of that country, a system of discipline of the most severe description was kept up amongst the French troops; and that under the power of that period there was a most wasteful sacrifice of human life. As to the Wurtemberg army, though he had seen them, he could say nothing as to the discipline by which that force was now governed; but he could give the House some information on the subject of the discipline observed in the armies of other powers on the continent. He had received a letter from a gentleman who was well acquainted with the regulations of the Prussian, Saxon, and Hanoverian armies, and with the leave of the House, he would read some extracts. In the Prussian army the punishment of the cane was universal and arbitrary; but the constitution of that army was essentially different from that of the English military force; for there every man was obliged to serve. A soldier, on entering, belonged to what was called the first class, in which he was exempted from corporal punishment. But if he violated the military law on certain points, he was transferred to the second class, in which corporal punishment might be inflicted; but it did not necessarily expose him to such punishment, although it sometimes happened that the transfer and the punishment were made at the same time. The punishment of the cane was, at all times, inflicted by non-commissioned officers, and in secret. Would the hon. member wish to see such a system of secret flogging adopted in our army? Another regulation was, that only forty stripes could be inflicted without the sentence of a court-martial. Would the hon. member desire to see an arbitrary system of this kind adopted in the British army? The extracts then went on to detail the other species of punishment to which the Prussian soldiers were liable. There was that of confinement. This was of several sorts: first, sending a man to the guard-room, or for a short time to solitary confinement. The second was to solitary confinement, on bread and water, and a forfeiture of pay; and there was another species of confinement in which the prisoner was not permitted to lie down. Was the hon. member aware of these facts when he stated that torture was abolished in foreign armies? Another species of punishment was, the criminal was fastened to a tree, or to a wall, with his face turned towards it, and continued in that posture for a considerable period without being permitted to lie down. This was an outline of the discipline in the Prussian service; and, be it observed, this was described as the mildest military service on the continent.—He would now state some points as to the discipline of the Saxon army. The highest punishment was shooting; but in many cases, after death the body was delivered over to the common hangman to be stretched upon the rack. There were, besides, several degrees of punishment by confinement, solitary confinement—sometimes with the addition of being fed on bread and water—sometimes confined with leg-irons of 32 lb. weight; and after the infliction of this punishment a second time, the man was declared altogether unworthy of being allowed to remain in the army. Another description of punishment was—a soldier was kept in solitary confinement, in chains, in a cell, without bed or bedding, and frequently in a position called crouching; that was, the body was bent forward, by the hands and feet being fastened together, so that the party could not, while in that state, lie down. Was not that torture? The longest period during which this punishment might be inflicted at frequent intervals, was eight months; but in some cases it was limited to six. The gallant general next proceeded to contrast the military punishments of Hanover with those of this country, and to show from such contrast that the former were full as severe as the latter. He conceived that these statements would serve to confute the assertion, that other nations were more mild than we were in their military punishments, and that there had been an abandonment of torture in all nations except in England. As to the proposal, that the system of flogging should be relinquished in this country, and retained in our colonies, he thought such a regulation would be highly unjust, and attended with the most pernicious consequences. It was, in his opinion, the liability which a soldier was under to be sent to any part of the globe, and to encounter every variety of clime and disease, which mainly contributed to raise our military service to the high eminence it had attained; he also considered the continual interchange of

troops of very great advantage to the service. The empire was not confined to the three kingdoms; there were limbs and members of it in every quarter of the globe; and surely it would form a very inconvenient and invidious distinction to have one system of discipline for our troops at home, and another for those stationed abroad. It had been said that this was a boon for the army; if it were so, he must, as far as he was connected with the army, beg leave to reject it. It was to our discipline that we owed all our military honour; it was not the arms or dress of our army, but its discipline which rendered it useful to its country, and feared by its neighbours; but if he had had no other reason for rejecting this boon, as it was termed, he must confess that when he considered the quarter whence it was offered, he felt but little disposed to accept it. It was somewhat strange to find the same individuals coming forward to present a boon to that army, which they had not long ago stigmatized as a mere engine in the hands of ministers, to be applied towards the destruction of our liberties. For his part, he was fearful of accepting any thing, in the way of gift, from that hand which had attempted " with desperate hook" to cut down the military glory of the country—to deprive the army of the means of education for those who were to fill its future ranks—and to take from the veteran the well-earned reward of his toils and perils. When he found boons offered from such a quarter, he could not help exclaiming with the poet—" Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes."

Sir *R. Wilson* said, he would not enter into any particular exemplification of a painful nature; but he would state generally, that his experience left no doubt on his mind, that the sort of punishment under discussion was one which ought to be abolished. It continued to exist in our military code, though every other power in Europe had rejected it. No such punishment was known in France, nor in many parts of Germany; nor in any shape similar to our own, even in Austria. In Holland it was completely abolished. The king of the Netherlands, on his return to that country, confirmed a decree previously issued for its abolition, and it had not since been re-introduced. The abolition had been attended with no prejudice whatever to the military service of that country. The gallant general had adverted to the great waste of human life which had taken place in France during the reign of its late emperor. He believed this had been very much exaggerated. We had before us a recent instance where the French army maintained the greatest propriety of conduct, under circumstances calculated to produce great disorders—he alluded to the late invasion of Spain, on which occasion he believed no irregularities had been committed which could in any way disparage the discipline of that army. The gallant general had also drawn an analogy between the English and Roman armies, and seemed to think that both of them owed their courage to the system of flogging which prevailed in them; but he would ask, where was ever a more cruel people than the Romans? What atrocities were they not in the habit of committing on their slaves? On one occasion, where a murder had been committed by a single slave, 650 were consigned to instant execution, as an atonement for it. Was this the description of people to whom we ought to be anxious to compare ourselves? The gallant general had spoken of the cane being used by other powers as an instrument of punishment; but was there any analogy between a cane and a cat-o'-nine-tails?—was there any similarity in punishment between striking a man who had his clothes on with a cane, and flogging a man's naked back with an instrument calculated to tear his skin and flesh from his bones? The gallant general had alluded to a punishment abroad, which prevented the offender from reposing; but he should like to know what kind of repose one of our soldiers enjoyed after he had received eight or nine hundred lashes. If flogging were abolished in our army, it would soon be composed of a different description of persons. In consequence of the prevalence of this system, our soldiers were at present frequently the outcasts of society, who had adopted this profession because they were neither fitted for, nor could get admitted into, any other: whereas, let corporal punishments be done away with, and then farmers' sons would have no reluctance in entering into the army; which they were now deterred from doing through fear that they might thereby be subjected to a punishment which would disgrace them during life. Indeed, it formed the chief objection to this system of punishment, that it degraded the

moral character, and that it vilified the individual who had been subjected to it to the last day of his life. He was convinced, that after this experiment had been tried for twelve months, there would be no complaints from officers, that they found any difficulty in controlling their men without having recourse to flogging.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, he perfectly coincided with his gallant friend, that it was the nature of the punishment and not the severity of it, which was to be objected to. He thought some other mode might be devised equally effectual; such as stoppage of pay or provisions; at any rate, any expedient was preferable to flogging. There might be some few individuals in the army of such base and callous minds, that nothing but flogging could have any effect upon them; but it was neither just nor proper, that in order to meet these few peculiar cases, the comfort and credit of the whole army should be sacrificed.

Sir *F. Blake* deprecated the infliction of corporal punishment.

Colonel *Johnson* said, that the whole argument of the gallant general opposite, went to prove, that the chief good to be derived from the soldier must first be flogged into him. For his own part, he thought that if commanders would only contrive to command their own tempers, there would be but little recourse to that disgraceful, unnecessary, and detestable punishment.

Lord *Palmerston* said, he did not wish to put the question on unfair grounds. He was ready to admit, that whenever punishment was accompanied with ignominy, it must necessarily have the effect of hardening the offender; but he conceived that the doing away with this punishment would have the effect of introducing other and greater evils. There was something in the constitution of an army which required some stronger and more speedy power to control it, than was necessary for the regulation of a mere civil body. Indeed, the history of every age and country showed this; and he would assert without fear of contradiction, that corporal punishment had prevailed in every army which had ever existed; and whether that punishment was administered with a cane or with a lash, did not seem to him to make much difference; at least with regard to the ignominy of it, which appeared to be the greatest objection which had been raised against it. He could assure the House that a disposition existed in the highest quarter to have recourse to corporal punishment as seldom as possible; and when, from the returns made to the commander-in-chief, it appeared that corporal punishment had been frequently inflicted in a regiment, the conclusion which he universally drew from it was, that the officers had been remiss in their duty. The argument of his gallant friend had been totally misrepresented, when it was imputed to him that he had ascribed the courage of the Roman and English armies to the system of flogging which prevailed in them. When it was considered that our army was raised by voluntary enlistment and not by conscription, it would be readily conceived that there must necessarily be no small difficulty in controlling a body of such different tempers and habits. He looked upon the proposition of the hon. member for Aberdeen, for confining the system of flogging to the troops employed in our colonies, and abolishing it at home, as highly objectionable, and he would conclude by re-assuring the House, that there existed a very strong disposition in the high quarter which had the direction of the army, to mitigate corporal punishment, as far as it could be mitigated, with a due regard to the maintenance of proper discipline in the army.

Sir *R. Fergusson* said, he was convinced from the speech which the noble lord had just made, that he agreed in opinion with his hon. friend who had brought forward this motion, though in his situation it might not be prudent to avow it. The analogy which a gallant general had endeavoured to draw between the soldiers of foreign powers and our own army ought not to be permitted for a single moment. The former were the subjects of despotic powers; the latter were the subjects of a free state. As far as his own personal experience went, he had always observed, that the best discipline was preserved in those regiments where corporal punishment was least frequently inflicted. From this he inferred, that whilst regiments were employed on home service, their discipline could be maintained without having recourse to the whip, or the cat-o'-nine-tails.

General *Townshend* observed, that having been in the performance of regimental duty for thirty years, he might be permitted to say, that he brought at least the benefit of experience to this question. Corporal punishments had formerly been

very prevalent in the regiment of Guards to which he had the honour to belong; but he was happy to say, that of late the frequency of its infliction had much diminished. He was, however, of opinion that gentlemen were much mistaken who thought that the discipline of the army could be maintained without corporal punishment.

The committee divided. For the clause 47; Against it 99; majority 52;

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, March 13.

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY.] The House having resolved itself into a committee of Ways and Means,

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* rose to make his promised exposition of the Financial Situation of the Country, and addressed the committee as follows*:—

Although, Sir, the circumstances under which we are now called upon to review the situation of our finances, differ in some material respects from those which existed at the corresponding period of the last year, yet there is nothing, in my mind, in the present aspect of public affairs, which ought to create either alarm or despondency. There may be grounds, and no doubt there are grounds, for much of individual sympathy for the severe distress which recent events have brought upon many classes of the community; and it is impossible that the causes which have tended to produce that distress should not, at the same time, be accompanied by much public inconvenience and embarrassment. But, Sir, I think I may venture to say, that the violence of the storm has passed away; that the clouds which impended over us have begun to disperse; and that, by the very conflict of the elements, the atmosphere has, to a certain degree, been cleared and purified.

If, indeed, there were any thing doubtful in the situation in which we now stand, and in the difficulties by which we have been so recently surrounded;—if there were any thing obscure or mysterious in their nature;—if they had arisen from causes beyond our comprehension;—then, indeed, there might be much more reason for uneasiness than appears to me to exist at the present moment. But in all the discussions which have taken place in parliament upon this subject in the course of the present session,—although there has undoubtedly been a great difference of opinion as to the precise extent to which different causes may have operated to produce certain results, there has prevailed among us, I think, but one sentiment as to the general nature of those causes, and as to their general operation in producing such consequences. I confess, therefore, that to my mind, this circumstance is a source of no ordinary consolation.

In the course, however, of these discussions, there has been, in my opinion, a great deal of very unnecessary contest between those who are sneeringly denominated philosophers, and those who designate themselves by the more humble title of practical men. I call it "unnecessary contest," because I consider it to be the bounden duty of the legislature to endeavour at all times to render available the sound reasoning and theory of one class, by applying to them the practical experience of the other. It is only by a just application of the lessons of experience to the development of sound principles, that parliament can be enabled to determine upon its course; it is only by a judicious combination of these, the two elements of all wise conclusions, that the House and the public can be empowered to form a just estimate of the situation in which the country may be placed, and to arrive at an accurate and satisfactory decision. But, if those who have to prepare their minds for the consideration, or for the determination of subjects of this nature, are to be told that books must be thrown aside, and elementary reasoning rejected, I know not at what fountain they are to drink, if they are to be driven from those springs where science and knowledge are the presiding deities. And, Sir, when we find that in every class of the community knowledge has extended, and is extending itself to a degree, which but half a century ago would have been deemed impossible, are we who sit here, some of us as the ministers of the Crown, and all of us as united in the important act of legislating for a great country,—are we, I ask, to be behind-hand in availing ourselves of the increasing lights of human intelligence? Is it not, on the contrary, our duty to struggle to be foremost in the race? Knowing, as we do,

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* From the original edition printed for J. Hatchard and Son.

that the progress of human knowledge must, in the first instance, be gradual and limited, it is our business to take care that, instead of being out-stripped, we lead the way; and, by assisting the judgment of our countrymen, enable them to avoid the errors into which they might otherwise fall, in regard to those great questions which so nearly affect their own, and the national interests. I am aware, Sir, that there are some persons who think this general diffusion of knowledge the misfortune of the age; but, for my own part, I confess that I cannot conceive how that mind can be constituted which contemplates the progress of human knowledge with an eye of fear. On me it produces an impression diametrically the reverse. I am convinced, that the more accurately the mass of the people is informed, the more they are in a condition to see and comprehend what is essential for their good, and the means by which that good is to be attained; the more likely are they to abstain from the use of means which would be prejudicial in their operation, and which would be calculated to prevent, rather than to forward the attainment of the good which they naturally desire to possess. If, then, all men (I was going to use that despised term, all philosophers) are agreed in the maxim, that "knowledge is power," the general diffusion of knowledge becomes of incalculable value to a nation; for if, with reference to our present difficulties, and to all difficulties of a similar kind in which we may be placed hereafter, we find the people at large, if we find the legislature in accordance with the people, and if we find the government in accordance with the legislature—all building their conclusions on sound principles, all proceeding on the foundation of correct reasoning, I confess I think we may treat with comparative indifference the recurrence of the dangers by which we have lately been assailed; partly, because the chance of their recurrence will be diminished, and partly, because, if they should recur, we shall know better how to meet them.

Sir, it is under these circumstances that we are called upon to look at the situation in which our finances now stand, and to consider what are the prospects of the country for the future. I think, however, that before I can satisfactorily proceed to explain the view which his majesty's government takes of what it is fitting to do under existing circumstances, I ought to recall the attention of the committee to the course which has been pursued with respect to our financial system during the last two or three years. And I am the more anxious to do this because I have been reproached,—and reproached in no very equivocal terms—with having, on former occasions, used warmer language than I ought to have used, and with having contributed by that language to the production of much of that mischief which we all so deeply deplore. Sir, it may be true, it undoubtedly is true, that in adverting to the situation of the country in the last few years, during which it has been my lot to have any concern in matters of this kind, I have used strong expressions of congratulation. It is true, I say, that, on such occasions, I have described the country as in a condition of prosperity. And, Sir, I do not now regret that language; I do not now depart from that declaration; for surely the country is not to be considered in a state of decadence because some untoward circumstances may have occurred, to interrupt her progress, and even throw her back, for the moment, in her course. But this I will venture to add, that however I may have erred in the terms which I have employed; however, from the delight which every honest man must feel in seeing his native land flourishing and happy, I may have congratulated the House on the result with more of earnest warmth than of calculating hesitation, I have, in no case, stated any thing as fact but that which was strictly true: and, I think I can satisfy the committee, upon a reference to what I have led them to expect during the last three years, and to the results which have actually ensued, not only that I have not intentionally deceived the country (though that, indeed, has, I believe, not been imputed to me) but, that no deception at all has been practised.

When, in the year 1823, it first became my duty to submit to the House a view of our finances, I ventured to assume that, in the course of that year, a certain amount of revenue would be realised; and allow me to ask, what was the result? It was found that my estimate, not formed upon any over-confident anticipation of improvement and increase, but upon the plain and simple basis of the revenue which had been already received, was far below the actual amount. I assumed, in that year, that the Customs, the Excise, the Stamp duties, the Assessed Taxes, and

sundry miscellaneous items, would produce an income of 52,200,000*l.* In the course of that session, we repealed taxes to the amount of about 3,200,000*l.*; of that sum I calculated that about a million and a half would be lost to the revenue in the course of 1823; so that in point of fact, my original estimate would have been borne out, if the receipts had been 1,500,000*l.* less than 52,200,000*l.* Now, what was the result? Why, that the actual revenue, after sustaining the loss that I have mentioned, amounted to 52.017,000*l.*; being less by 183,000*l.* only than my first estimate; and exceeding, by 1,318,000*l.*, what would have been sufficient to realise my anticipations, after the reduction of taxes had been adopted. In regard to the year 1823, therefore, it is clear that I held out no expectations which were not justified by the event. And if the committee will examine the accounts for the following year, they will be led to the same conclusion. In the year 1824, I estimated the probable produce of the revenue at 51,265,000*l.* In the course of that session, however, taxes were repealed to a very considerable amount; and I calculated that the loss which the revenue would immediately sustain in consequence, would be 630.000*l.* But what was the fact? The actual receipts of the year, notwithstanding such a reduction of taxes, were considerably beyond the original estimate which I had formed: for, the estimate being 51,265,000*l.*, the actual produce was 52,562,000*l.*; being an excess of nearly 1,300,000*l.* Again, in 1825, I assumed that the revenue derived from the same sources would be 51,975,000*l.* From the repeal of taxes, subsequently enacted, I expected that in the course of that year the loss upon that assumed amount would be about 650,000*l.* Yet, the actual receipt, notwithstanding the defalcation occasioned by that cause, and by the commercial difficulties and pressure that began to be felt at the latter end of the year 1825, was 52,259,000*l.*; or, 384,000*l.* above my original estimate in the statement of the Budget; an estimate founded upon an hypothesis which had no reference to any reduction of taxes in the course of that year.

The result of all these statements is this:

The estimated revenue for	1823 was	£.52,200,000
	1824 ...	51,265,000
	1825 ...	51,975,000
	Total	£.155,440,000

The actual receipt for	1823 was	£.52,017,000
	1824 ...	52,562,000
	1825	52,259,000
	Total	£.156,838,000

It thus appears, that in those three years the actual receipts exceeded the estimates by the sum of 1,398,000*l.*; notwithstanding the concomitant repeal of no less than 8,000,000*l.* of taxes. I say, then, and I say boldly, that I have not erred as to facts; and that I have not been guilty, even involuntarily, of deluding the country by the language which I employed.

Allow me, Sir, here to advert to another point, to which it is material that the attention of the Committee should be called. I have already stated, that in the course of the three years to which I have been alluding, taxes to the amount of 8,000,000*l.* were repealed. But I think I should give a very imperfect view of the situation of our finances, and of what has been done in respect to them, if I did not request the committee to go back with me a little further, namely, to the year 1816, when, after winding up all the expenses of the war, parliament was enabled to establish and pursue something like a systematic diminution of our burthens. It is very material, Sir, that this subject should be adverted to, because it has been argued, in the course of the present session, that in fact the reduction in the burthens of the people which has been made since the conclusion of the war, is not worth speaking of; that it is but a feather in the scale, opposed to the general amount of our expenditure; and that it has not been more than sufficient to balance the difference which has taken place in the value of our currency. It has also been maintained, that it is impossible for us to return to a more sound currency (for the purpose of returning to which, measures have lately been, and now are, under the contemplation of parliament)—that that perilous experiment, as it is described to be, cannot safely be hazarded, unless his majesty's ministers are prepared decidedly and essentially to curtail the whole expenditure of the empire at once, inasmuch as it would be impracticable to effect the melioration of our currency, and at the same time continue to levy the amount of taxation of which the Exchequer is at present in the receipt. Sir, I consider these two propositions to be wholly unfounded in fact and in reasoning. I think I shall be able to show the committee, that there is

no ground whatever for the assertion that we have done nothing,—or rather that we have not done enough. When I say that we cannot justly be charged with not having done enough, I do not by any means wish to be understood that we ought to stop in the course of reduction, where we are; that is far from being my view, or my feeling, on the subject; but I am prepared to prove, that there is no truth in the statement, that we have been doing little or nothing; and just as little in the assertion, that the melioration which we are endeavouring to effect in our currency is inconsistent with the present scale of our expenditure, and the present amount of our taxation.

Adverting, in the first place, to the reduction which has taken place since the year 1816, I will state to the committee the precise process of the reduction which originated at that period—the different items on which it has been made—and the principles by which it has been regulated. And, when I have made this statement, I think the committee will see that parliament has not been asleep upon its post; that it has not neglected the great duty—for a great duty I must always consider it —of endeavouring, in a time of peace, to relieve the people, as much as possible, from the oppressive burthens which have been unavoidably imposed during the continuance of war.

In 1816 (the first year in which any reduction of taxation took place), the Property tax was repealed. I know very well, Sir, that the repeal of that tax was effected contrary to the opinion and recommendation of his majesty's government. It is undoubtedly true, that under the circumstances of the time, government was desirous that the Property tax should be continued for two years longer. The House thought otherwise; they thought it ought to be repealed immediately, and repealed it was. It is not my purpose now to inquire whether government was right in proposing to retain it, or the House in resolving to take it away; but, at all events, the people gained the advantage of the repeal of a tax, the annual amount of which was no less than 14,320,000*l.* In the same year, the War Malt duty of 2,790,000*l.* was abandoned; and further relief was afforded, in the diminution of war-customs, duties on tonnage, and coasting duties, to the extent of 828,000*l.* To these are to be added, 35,000*l.* arising from a small reduction of the assessed taxes in Ireland, and 315,000*l.* from the diminution of the duty on Malt and Spirits in the same country. The total amount of taxation thus repealed in 1816 was 18,288,000*l.* In the year 1817, partial relief, under the heads of Shop-windows, Husbandry Horses, &c. was afforded, to the extent of 280,000*l.* In 1818, various assessed taxes were reduced in Ireland, to the amount of 236,000*l.* In 1819, the policy pursued by parliament was of a different character; and a very considerable addition, to the amount of 3,190,000*l.*, was made to the taxation of the country. In 1820, no alteration whatever took place. In 1821, the repeal of the Agricultural Horse tax lessened the burthens of the farming class of the people by 480,000*l.* In 1822, the duty upon Malt was reduced one shilling a bushel, and the public were relieved thereby to the amount of 1,400,000*l.* Nearly the whole of the impost upon Salt was also removed, being a reduction of 1,295,000*l.*; there was likewise a reduction of half the duty upon Leather, 300,000*l.*; the Tonnage duty, 160,000*l.*; and the tax upon Hearths and Windows in Ireland, 200,000*l.*;—so that the total amount of taxes repealed in the year 1822 was 3,355,000*l.* In 1823, various assessed taxes in England were repealed, to the amount of 2,250,000; whilst the relinquishment of the whole of them in Ireland, saved the inhabitants of that country the payment of 100,000*l.* Added to this, was a reduction of the duties on Spirits, both in Ireland and in Scotland, to the extent of 800,000*l.*; and a reduction of 50,000*l.* in several minor branches of the Customs. The total relief in 1823, therefore, was 3,200,000*l.* In 1824, the following duties, to the following amount, were diminished: *viz.*—on Rum, 150,000*l.*; Coals, 200,000*l.*; Law Stamps, 200,000*l.*; Wool, 350,000*l.*; Silk, 527,000*l.*; Union duties, from 1822, 300,000*l.*;—making a total of 1,727,000*l.* —The total repeal in 1825, was not less than 3,146,000*l.*; and it was produced in the following manner:—by the relinquishment of the remainder of the Salt duty, about 200,000*l.*; of the duty on Hemp, 100,000*l.*; on Coffee and Cocoa, 150,000*l.*; on Wine, 900,000*l.*; on British Spirits and Rum, 1,250,000*l.*; on Cyder, 20,000*l.*; on Assessed Taxes, 276,000*l.*; and, finally, on Customs, in various minor articles of commerce, 250,000*l.*—Thus, Sir, it appears that the grand total of taxes repealed from 1816 to 1825, amounts to the sum of 30,712,000*l.*; from this, however, must

be deducted the sum of 3,190,000*l*., being the amount of taxes imposed in 1819, for the purpose of establishing an efficient Sinking fund: but, taking that sum from the total of 30,712,000*l*., it will leave 27,522,000*l*. as the clear remission of taxation since the year 1816.

Now, Sir, I say with confidence, that the repeal of 27,522,000*l*. of taxes is a substantial and important relief to the country; and that it is impossible for any man in his senses to argue, that this large remission of duties has not mainly contributed to that increased consumption which has itself augmented the revenue. It is very true, that in 1816, if the rates of exchange with foreign countries be taken as the criterion, the value of the currency was depreciated, perhaps to the extent of five per cent; so that the whole reduction of taxes which, as I have stated, took place in that year, cannot perhaps be looked upon as a clear reduction, since a part of it might be necessary, in order to meet the rectification of the circulating medium; if the depreciation were five per cent, then, upon the actual amount of taxation in the year in which it occurred, namely 61,000,000*l*., that portion would amount to about 3,000,000*l*.; and if we deduct this 3,000,000*l*. from the 27,552,000*l*. of taxes remitted, it will leave 24,552,000*l*. as the actual reduction of the burthens of the people since 1816. And, when I assert and prove that actual relief has been afforded to this extent, I know not that it is necessary for me to argue, a priori, that it has done good; because I apprehend that the common sense of every man must demonstrate to him that that must be the inevitable consequence. Let us, however, look at it a little in detail; if we deduct the 24,000,000*l*. from 58,000,000*l*. (which would have been the amount of the revenue, after deducting the sum of 3,000,000*l*., to which I have before alluded), the result would leave only 34,000,000*l*. as the produce of the revenue; but the actual receipts of 1825, notwithstanding all the diminutions which I have been describing, were not less than 52,000,000*l*. And how have the 18,000,000*l*., the difference between the two sums, been obtained? solely from the greater means which the people have possessed of consuming the various articles upon which taxes are levied: and if, Sir, we were to try this question by the test of the feelings of the people who had to pay the taxes, I ask whether we should not find that the remission of them had given the liveliest satisfaction? I see in his place the hon. member for Wareham, who so actively and successfully exerted himself to effect the repeal of the duty on salt. The ground which that hon. gentleman stated, and truly and clearly stated, for that repeal, was, the severity with which the duty upon salt pressed on the poor man. Ask the poor man, now that he has no duty to pay upon salt, whether, when he comes to sum up the amount of the charges for his maintenance and comfort, he does not feel better satisfied, and more at his ease? He will tell you that he is greatly obliged to the hon. member for Wareham, for having been the means of inducing the House to repeal that tax. I should like, Sir, to ask the 171,000 persons who were last year relieved from the payment of the house-tax, or the 635,000 persons who were last year exempted from the window-tax, if they have derived no practical benefit from those reductions, and if they do not feel grateful to parliament for having made them. I should like to ask them, whether they agree with the hon. member for Aberdeen, that nothing has been done for their relief, either by his majesty's government, or by the legislature; and whether they feel, as the hon. member for Aberdeen would fain persuade them that they ought, that as much money is now taken out of their pockets in the shape of taxes, as was the case before those reductions took place. I should like to ask them whether they agree with the hon. gentleman, that their feelings and wishes have been set at nought; and that his majesty's government can think of nothing but plunging into some wanton and extravagant expense, for some wretched and trumpery purpose of patronage! I declare most sincerely, that if there be any thing uppermost in my mind in the consideration of these matters, it is an earnest desire to lay aside all thoughts of mere official interest and patronage. In considering the expediency of the abolition of any particular tax, the miserable question of patronage has never crossed my mind. It has never occurred to me to ask myself, "What will be the consequence, if government should lose this or that source of influence?" No doubt, Sir, that, in many respects, it would have been very agreeable to me, personally, if a different system had been pursued, and if the patronage of his majesty's government had not been cut down as it has been.

I have many friends upon whom I should have been exceedingly glad to confer some convenient appointment. But, when applications have been made to me on such a subject, I have felt no difficulty in saying, "I am really very sorry, but I have nothing to give you; we have no spare offices, and no spare money; we have reduced every thing to the lowest point; we cannot put any individual into a public situation who is either too old, or too young, or too idle, to do his duty. I can recommend to an office under government only the man who is competent to fill it properly; if you are not competent, I am very sorry for it, but you cannot come in." This is the language which I and others invariably hold on such occasions; and the consequence has been, that I believe it is agreed, on all hands, that the efficiency of the public service, in every department, was never more complete than at the present moment.

Allow me also to say, Sir, that, during the period to which I have been referring, the permanent burthens of the country—I mean those connected with the debt of the country—have been materially reduced. But, before I touch upon that point, it may be satisfactory to the committee to know a little in what ratio the power of consumption in the country has increased since the year 1816; and here I shall be able to show, beyond the possibility of dispute, that the fears of such as assert that the country cannot go on without the adoption of some undefined and unintelligible change in our present system, are perfectly visionary.

I have in my hand a list of a great variety of articles paying duty, with a comparison of the amount of those articles on which duty was paid in 1816, and the amount on which duty was paid in 1825. From this list I find that the increase has been in the following ratio:—Auctions 64½ per cent, Beer 16½, Bricks 188, Candles 36¼, Licences 36, Paper 51⅔, Printed Goods 110¼, Hard Soap 113¼, Soft Soap 121¼, Tea 20¼, Crown Glass 95½, Green Glass 10¼, Flint Glass 104, Plate Glass 108⅓, Leather 29, Malt 50, British Spirits 53⅖, Foreign Spirits 81½, Butter 317½, Sugar 19, Tallow 201, Timber 196, Deals 182⅓, Coffee and Cocoa 43, Hemp 74¾; Rum, a decrease of 12¾ per cent, Raw Silk, an increase of 274½ Thrown Silk 180, Tobacco 13¼, Wine 88, Sheeps' Wool 443, Cotton Wool 119.

Honourable gentlemen may exclaim, "Do you mean to say that the increase of consumption is to be taken strictly in that extravagant ratio; as upon wool, for instance, at 443 per cent?" I answer, Certainly not: but, I produce this document to show that there is that progressive power of consumption in this country which is indispensable to her greatness, and which forms the most convincing proof of the inherent vigour which has hitherto enabled her to meet and overcome difficulties the most formidable, and on which I confidently rely for similar success in future.

I will now return to what I was about to state with regard to the public debt. Whilst we have been decreasing the pressure of taxation, to the amount of 27,522,000*l.*, since 1816, and of 8,000,000*l.* since 1823, we have not been inattentive to the permanent burthens of the kingdom. In this part of my statement, I will advert only to the transactions of the last three years, because, it was not till 1823 that the present arrangement of the Sinking-fund was carried into effect. On the 5th of January, 1823, the public funded debt amounted to 796,530,000*l.*; on the 5th of January, 1826, it amounted only to 778,128,000*l.*; being a reduction in the three years of 18,401,000*l.*; which is at the rate of nearly 6,134,000*l.* per annum. I will now direct the attention of the committee to the unfunded debt. On the 5th of January, 1823, the unfunded debt was 36,281,000*l.*; on the 5th of January, 1826, it was 31,703,000*l.*; being a reduction of nearly 4,578,000*l.* The total charge—and that is the only true way of looking at the subject, for all that we are interested in knowing is, not what is the nominal capital of the debt, but what it costs us annually—the total charge (including the charge for management) on the 5th of January, 1823, was 28,123,000*l.*; the total charge of the unredeemed funded debt, on the 5th of January, 1826, was 27,117,000*l.*; being a reduction on the charge of the funded debt of 1,006,000*l.* The interest on Exchequer bills, during the same period, was reduced from 1,100,000*l.* to 820,000*l.*; being a reduction of 280,000*l.* The total charge of the two descriptions of debt was, on the 5th of January, 1823, 29,286,000*l.*; on the 5th of January, 1826, only 27,946,000*l.*; being a reduction of 1,340,000*l.*, in the annual charge of the

whole debt, in the course of three years. And yet, the hon. member for Aberdeen says, that all this is nothing—that it is a mere feather in the scale—that it affords no substantial relief to the people! Now, Sir, in my view of the case, it is of no consequence whether this state of things has been produced by a sinking fund, or by a surplus, or by any other means. It is not the name of the thing, but the substance, that is important. If the nation pays less in this respect now by 1,340,000*l*. than it did in 1823, and if, at the same time, good faith has been preserved with the public creditor, and adequate provision made for the maintenance of the character, honour, and security of the country; if we have also been enabled to do much towards the extension of the benefits of religious instruction and worship to the poorer classes; if we have furnished the means of interior improvement, in the construction and repair of roads, bridges, harbours, and objects of that kind; if we had something likewise to bestow on the promotion of the arts and sciences; and if, in three years, we have nevertheless repealed 8,000,000*l*. of taxes, and have reduced the annual expense of the debt considerably more than 1,000,000*l*., I say, fearlessly, that we have done something, and that we may boldly face our constituents, in whatever part of the country, and at whatever time, we may have to appeal to them for their suffrages.

Sir, I have just been alluding to that portion of our annual charge which has been diminished by a reduction of the charges of the debt. There is, however, another part of our expenditure, against which I have always felt inclined to wage the most unrelenting warfare;—I mean, the expense attending the collection of the revenue. It is a subject which has often attracted the attention of the House; and I have never allowed it to go out of my sight. We have not been idle or inattentive on this point. In 1818, the expense of collecting the taxes of the United Kingdom was 4,353,000*l*.; in 1825, it was reduced to 3,832,000*l*.; being a diminution of no less than half a million. This was a great deal to do in the time. Considering that great changes in such matters cannot be accomplished all at once, let me say, that this reduction of half a million affords, at least, prima facie evidence that we have endeavoured to do our duty. Nor, Sir, let it be supposed that this was a very easy task. We have had many strong prejudices, many powerful interests, many deep-rooted habits, to contend with. I think I cannot give a better proof of the sort of feeling which we have had to encounter, than by adverting to what has been recently published to the world in the northern part of this island. It seems that the extinction of the two independent Boards of Customs and Excise in Scotland (and the same course has been pursued in Ireland), and their amalgamation with the central Boards in England, are to be considered by every true Scotchman as derogatory to his national dignity, offensive to his national pride, and subversive—Good God! of what?—subversive of his prescriptive rights! When Antony, in the beautiful speech which Shakspeare puts into his mouth over the dead body of Cæsar, after an eloquent and pathetic description of the wounds under which Cæsar had fallen, exclaims, in a burst of passionate enthusiasm,—

"Oh what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then you, and I, and all of us fell down,
And bloody treason flourished over us:"

the appeal was not more vehement, the passions of his auditors were not more keenly excited, than the appeal which is now made, and the fire which is now kindled, against the unfortunate author of the woeful tragedy which terminated the existence of two insignificant fiscal departments! Sir, I could not imagine, at first, what was meant by all this indignation. I felt almost like "a guilty thing," oppressed by the weight of some undefined offence. If I chanced to meet my noble friend at the head of the Admiralty, or any of my hon. friends who sit at the same Board, I hardly dared look them in the face. I felt confident that the denunciation was for some dreadful crime, but I knew not what; and I was left for some time in all the agony of doubt. At last, I had the consolation of recollecting that I had Scotch blood, and good old Scotch blood too, flowing in my veins; and was persuaded that I could never be insensible to the honour and dignity of that ancient country. But, Sir, I confess that, when I have been passing in review all the signal triumphs which Scotland has achieved, in all that adorns, and ennobles, and benefits the human race; when I have been calling to mind the originality, the grace, and

the genius of her poets; the eloquence, the accuracy, and the research of her historians; the elaborate lucubrations, and the profound discoveries, of her philosophers; when I have been watching their progress as they respectively either traversed the delightful regions of fancy, or penetrated the depths and recesses of history and of science, I never thought of including among the worthies of Scotland, the members of her independent Board of Excise. And when I have been reading with greatful exultation of the heroic exploits of an Abercrombie, a Moore, a Lynedoch, and a Hopetoun; when, two years ago, it fell to my lot to propose to this House to do an act of tardy justice, by proposing to vote a monument to the memory of lord Duncan; I certainly never dreamt that the honour of Scotland would be tarnished, if in the same year I transferred the seat of the Board of Customs from Edinburgh to London. I always thought that the honour of Scotland rested on a more solid basis. I thought that the glory of the great men who have adorned the annals of that country, would have shone with perennial light, if the Excise had never meddled with her whiskey, nor the Customs controlled her commerce; and I trust we may long continue to contemplate their lustre with instruction and delight, although her revenue boards have lost the affected importance of their imaginary independence, and have been swallowed up. O! dreadful catastrophe! in the all-devouring vortex of English uniformity. When, too, I am told, that the abolition of these and similar offices is something disrespectful to the what is called (not however by me) the impoverished nobility of Scotland, I think, that if I were a real Scotchman, I should be too proud to admit that the honour of the ancient lineage of that ancient kingdom would be diminished, because the government had less patronage to offer, and her nobility less of emolument to covet. These measures, dictated alone by the necessity of judicious retrenchment, may indeed be represented as punishments inflicted on an innocent and unoffending people, and the wrath of Scotland may be denounced against their author; but, as long as I am armed with the consciousness of seeking to diminish the burthens, and to increase the happiness of the people, I can look without terror upon the flashing of the Highland claymore, though evoked from its scabbard by the incantations of the first magician of the age.

I shall now, Sir, proceed to the subject more immediately under our consideration, and call the attention of the committee to the financial condition of the country for the present year. I have already stated to the committee the great extent to which taxation has been diminished; I have stated the benefit which I am sure the country must have derived from the reduction; I have also shown how, out of that very reduction itself, may arise the means of carrying the benefit still further; and I shall now proceed to detail the estimate for the present year, 1st as respects the charges, and, 2ndly, the means by which I propose that those charges shall be met. The expenses are divided into two parts, viz.—the permanent charges, and those which are the subject of annual votes; and as of the latter, a considerable portion has already been sanctioned by the House, I do not think it will be necessary for me to trouble the committee with any comments or details respecting it. But the general heads of the two branches are as follows, viz.—

	£.
Interest and Management of the Public Debt	27,117,186
Interest of Exchequer (deficiency) Bills..................	50,000
Civil List, and Pensions of a permanent nature, charged on the Consolidated Fund, and not the subject of an annual vote	2,065,000
Half-pay Annuity	2,800,000
Sinking Fund	5,585,235
Permanent charge on Consol. Fund......	£.37,617,421

The annual votes this year in the Committee of Supply are as follows:—

	£
Army	7,747,000
Navy..........................	6,135,000
Ordnance	1,754,000
Miscellaneous	2,225,000
Interest of Exchequer Bills .	850,000
Annual Votes, ...	£.18,711,000
Add the Permanent Charge	£.37,617,421
The whole expenditure of the year.	£.56,328,421

I now, Sir, proceed to state the revenue upon which I calculate to meet this expenditure:

	£.
A small item, being the surplus of last year beyond the demand of the Sinking Fund, which I consider myself entitled to make available towards the expenditure of the present year	167,000
Customs and Excise; which I take together on account of the transfer to the Customs of a large proportion of the duties formerly collected by the Excise; and the impossibility of separating the items without great confusion........................	37,446,000
Stamps	7,400,000
Taxes (including the Assessed Taxes)	4,800,000
Post Office	1,550,000
Miscellaneous	1,360,000
The total income from these sources	£.52,723,000
Payment from the Trustees of Half-pay and Pensions......	4,320,000
The whole Receipts of the year	£.57,043,000
Deduct the Expenditure	56,328,421
Surplus for Parliament to deal with as they may think fit	£.714,579

Having thus stated the revenue on which I calculate to meet the expenditure of the present year, it is fit that I should state the grounds of that calculation. It may appear to the committee, that under all the existing circumstances I am now looking to a receipt higher than that which I have a right to expect; but I will distinctly specify the reasons which induce me to believe, that the amount on which I calculate will be realised. I begin by laying down, as the basis of my estimate, the actual receipt of the past year; making, afterwards, such variations as circumstances may appear to require. The actual receipt of the Customs and Excise for the year 1825 was 37,546,000*l.* But this sum would have been much larger had it not been for various occurrences which happened in the course of the year, and which affected those branches of the revenue to an extent much greater than I had anticipated; occurrences which cannot again take place. I allude, principally, to the amount repaid, in consequence of the reduction of the wine duty, to the holders of the stock on hand. This was no less than 1,050,000*l.*; a formidable sum; and much more, as I have already observed, than I conceived it would be. Since, however, it arose from a cause of casual occurrence, and, since there can be no operation parallel to it upon the Customs and Excise of the present year, I am entitled to assume, supposing no other circumstance interferes to reduce the nett receipt of the revenue, that this sum of 1,050,000*l.* would be receivable in the year 1826; that is to say, that it will not be abstracted from the gross revenue of Customs and Excise in 1826, as it was in 1825. I calculate, also, upon a small addition to the receipts of the present year, arising from the further operation of those measures for getting rid of divers useless or mischievous bounties, which my right hon. friend, the president of the Board of Trade, introduced so beneficially for the commerce of the country, in the last session of parliament. I take the amount of these to be about 50,000*l.* There was also another circumstance which most unexpectedly affected the revenue of last year. The committee is aware that, in the course of the last session, there was carried into effect one of the most extensive alterations and amendments ever made in the laws of Customs. Several hundred acts of parliament relating to them were, by the laborious and joint exertions of my hon. friend near me (one of the Secretaries of the Treasury), and of the gentlemen who were associated with him in the task of getting rid of so multifarious and inconvenient a system of legislation, reduced to about six clear and intelligible statutes. In the accomplishment of so great a work it is not wonderful that some minor errors should have crept in and escaped detection; and it so happened, that by one of those minor and venial errors, the revenue has been affected in a way for which we were not quite prepared. The duty on tobacco, which, at the beginning of the year 1825, was four shillings a pound, and which was meant to be continued at that rate during the remainder of the year, was so dealt with in one of these new acts, that, by some strange mischance, one shilling of it lapsed on the 5th of July; so that for one half of the last year, that is to say from the 5th of July, 1825, to the

5th of January 1826, the duty on tobacco has been reduced from four to three shillings a pound. This accidental omission has cost the revenue 450,000*l.* But, I am entitled to assume that, unless it should be the pleasure of the House to confirm permanently this temporary diminution of the duty on tobacco, that loss will not occur in the present year. The three items, then, to which I have alluded are as follows:—

	£.
Progressive reduction of Bounties	50,000
Wine Drawback, allowed last year to the wine merchants, but not to be deducted from this year's revenue	1,050,000
Loss by the lapse of Tobacco duty	450,000
	£.1,550,000
If to this be added the actual produce of the Customs and Excise in 1825	37,546,000
We have a Total of	£.39,096,000

It is, however, obvious, that it would be quite preposterous in his majesty's government to calculate upon such a receipt as this, under the present circumstances of the country. I think it would be exceedingly imprudent to do so, as I am perfectly ready to admit, that such a receipt is not likely to be realized in the course of the present year. It is our duty, then, to see what deductions from this amount of 39,096,000*l.* we ought to calculate upon. In the first place, there is to be taken into the account a further loss to the revenue, arising from the reduction of taxation last year; which further loss I estimate at 350,000*l.* The statement of the views of government, in respect to the reduction of taxes, took place at so early a period last year, that the effect of them began to be felt almost as soon as they were announced. In point of fact, during three quarters of the last year, we experienced three quarters of the whole amount of the loss which I had calculated as likely to accrue from the operation of the reductions. I therefore imagine that we may lose in the present year, from the same cause, not more than the amount of loss on the remaining quarter; and I estimate it at 350,000*l.* I feel, however, that I ought to explain to the committee how it happens that, after having stated the total amount of reductions effected last year to be no less than 3,146,000*l.*, I now, when speaking of the loss to be expected in one quarter, state it at no more than 350,000*l.* The reason is this; although the reduction of taxation, as estimated by a comparison with the previously existing rate, amounted to 3,146,000*l.*, yet, upon the principle that a judicious reduction of a high rate of taxation naturally leads to a great increase in the consumption of the articles taxed, I took the actual loss to the revenue at not much more than 1,500,000*l.* of which sum 276,000*l.* would fall upon the assessed taxes; so that 350,000*l.* being rather more than one fourth of the actual loss assumed upon the Customs and Excise, is as much as we may expect to lose in 1826.

I am, however, Sir, very sensible that, under all the circumstances attending the late derangement and confusion of the money market, and the consequent stagnation of the external commerce and the internal industry of the country, it would be very unsafe to frame any estimate of the revenue of the present year, without making a fair allowance for a further loss, which may be expected to arise from diminished consumption. I have endeavoured to form, as well as I could, some sort of calculation of the amount at which that loss ought to be taken. It is, undoubtedly, very difficult to come to any such precise conclusion upon this subject, as can be satisfactorily exemplified at once by any mere statement of figures. It must depend upon such an infinite variety of considerations, that possibly no two persons, although working with the same materials, and reasoning upon the same principles, would arrive at precisely the same result. But having already assumed that there will be a deficiency in the Customs and Excise of 350,000*l.* being the remainder of the loss occasioned by the reduction of taxation last year, I anticipate from diminished consumption a further loss of 1,300,000*l.*; which, notwithstanding the difficulty of coming to any precise decision upon the subject, I take to be as reasonable a view of the matter as can be taken under such uncertain circumstances. And I am confirmed in this view of the subject, when I refer to what has been the actual state of the Excise revenue during the two first months of the present

year, which were months of great pressure and great uneasiness, and during which the officers of the revenue were directed to abstain as much as possible from pressing inconveniently on those who were not in a condition to meet their demands, a course of proceeding which we felt ourselves called upon by the severity of the distress in some districts to adopt.—Looking, then, to the general receipts of the Excise in January and February, on all the articles in which there has been no alteration in the duties, and comparing them with the receipts in the corresponding months of 1825, it appears that the loss has not exceeded, for that period, the sum of 2,389*l.*

	£.
The gross receipts for January and February, 1825, were ...	2,259,669
Those from January and February, 1826, were	2,257,280
Decrease	£.2,389

On those items in which a reduction of duty was effected last year, such as Cyder, Glass, Licences, Sweets, and Vinegar, there has been a diminution of produce in the two months of January and February last, as compared with 1825, of 102,000*l.*

	£.
The produce in January and February 1825, was	292,933
The produce in 1826 was	190,933
Decrease	£.102,000

But this decrease does not arise principally from a diminished consumption of exciseable articles. It arises almost entirely from an alteration of a very extensive nature, which has been effected in regard to the system of granting licences in Ireland, and to the scale of duties payable on those licences. That system, the committee is perhaps aware, is now entirely changed. A great number of absurd regulations which formerly existed in that country have been abolished; as, for example, that which in various places in Ireland regulated the duty upon licences according to the fact of whether or not the Borough returned members to parliament. That was an absurdity, the reason of which I do not profess to be able to divine. But, at all events, the system upon which the duties on these licences are payable, has been, in almost every respect, assimilated, as much as possible, to that more reasonable arrangement which prevails in England. The consequence, however, is, that whereas formerly the duties on licences were payable early in the year, they will, most of them, not now be payable until after the 5th of July; and from this change there has resulted in the present quarter a loss of not less than 100,000*l.* If, therefore, I may venture to judge from the result of the two months in question, as regards the Excise, of the effect which diminished consumption may have, during the whole year, upon the two branches of Excise and Customs, taken together, I do not think that I am taking too sanguine a view, when I estimate the probable loss in this year from that cause at 1,300,000*l.* Deducting, then, this sum, and the deficiency to which I before alluded, from the amount of the Customs and Excise of last year, together with the additions which I have above specified, it will leave 37,446,000*l.* as the estimate of that branch of the revenue in 1826. The next head to which I shall advert, is that of Stamps. Stamps produced last year 7,447,923*l.*; I shall take their produce this year at 7,400,000*l.* The Post-office, last year, produced 1,595,461*l.*; I will suppose a falling off in the present year, of 45,461*l.*; which will leave the Post-office estimate 1,550,000*l.* The Assessed taxes produced last year 4,990,961*l.* The loss to the revenue on this head will be somewhat more considerable; since, of the 276,000*l.* remitted in 1825, not more than one fourth was lost in that year. I anticipate, therefore, a decrease of 190,961*l.*; which will leave that estimate 4,800,000*l.* The Miscellaneous items for 1826, will, on the other hand, be much larger than usual. The increase will proceed from three or four casual causes. In the first place there is a sum of 100,000*l.*, which, by treaty with the government of Holland, was to have been paid to this country in 1825. That sum, however, was not actually received within the year, and consequently could not form any part of the produce of 1825; although, as it is now, I believe, received, it will form a part of the estimate for 1826.

There is another sum, with respect to which I confess I did not anticipate that money from such a source would again find its way into the Exchequer—a sum which arises from what I am afraid many persons believe to be the never-ending lottery. The last lottery, I must explain to the committee, was contracted for in 1823. I acknowledge that, for my own part, I was

not aware, when that contract was made, that the usual system upon which lotteries are conducted would protract their existence one or two years beyond the period at which they might be contracted for. It appears that I was in the wrong; and it certainly was my mistake; it cannot, however, be now helped; and the consequence of this is, that in the present year, a sum of about 180,000*l.* will be derived to the revenue from these lotteries, which have so often, and so justly, met with the reprobation of the House. I am as rejoiced at *their* approaching termination as the House can be; for I felt it my duty to take the first opportunity of putting an end to a system which, however it might be glossed over by ingenious reasoning, was exceedingly inconsistent with those principles of good government which would seek to derive no advantage from any practice of gambling, which, whilst it is prohibited by the general law in its application to individuals, was permitted, under the lottery system, to be carried on by the government. There is another item, of some importance, which will come into the Exchequer in the course of the present year; and that is the return from Ireland of the old silver coinage, which has been called in, and replaced by the new. That new coinage cost us, last year, 500,000*l.* This year the old coin will come back, and will be available for the public service: it will, probably, amount to not less than 400,000*l.* The last point to be noticed, in respect to the miscellaneous receipts, is a sum arising from an arrangement between the Admiralty and the East India company; who, in consideration of the increase of the Navy, made with a view to the state of their affairs in India, have felt themselves bound in justice (as, it is my duty to say, they have with the utmost cheerfulness admitted), to pay 60,000*l.* for the benefit they are deriving from the augmented naval force stationed in the Indian seas to defend their possessions.—These several sums account for the increase of the miscellaneous items from 619,088*l.*, which was their produce last year, to 1,360,000*l.*, which is my estimate of them for the year 1826. The general estimate for the present year, therefore, stands thus:—

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE.

Produce of 1825		£.37,546,000
Add—Progressive Reduction of Bounties	£.50,000	
Wine Drawback	1,050,000	
Loss by lapse of Tobacco duty	450,000	
		1,550,000
		£.39,096,000
Deduct—Further loss from Reductions last year	£.350,000	
Further loss from diminished consumption	1,300,000	
		1,650,000
Estimate for 1826		£.37,446,000

STAMPS.

Produce of 1825	£.7,447,923
Deduct assumed loss in 1826	47,923
Estimate for 1826	£.7,400,000

TAXES.

Produce of 1825	£.4,990,961
Deduct loss from reduction in 1825	190,961
Estimate for 1826	£.4,800,000

POST-OFFICE.

Produce of 1825	£.1,595,461
Deduct assumed loss in 1826	45,461
Estimate for 1826	£.1,550,000

MISCELLANEOUS.

Produce of 1825		£.619,088
Add—Payment from Holland, Lottery, and East India Company, on account of naval force	£.340,912	
Add also—Silver from Ireland	400,000	
		740,912
Estimate for 1826		£.1,360,000

I assume, under these circumstances, that (as I before stated) the condition of the revenue, during the present year, will be such as to leave us a surplus, a clear surplus, after all the deductions which I have described, of 714,000*l.* Now, this sum is, perhaps, not a very large one; but I think it is worth something; and I also think that it may be made available to some useful purpose. At the same time, I apprehend that our choice as to its application is very limited on the present occasion, on account of the circumstances to which I have already alluded, regarding the unintentional alteration of the duty on tobacco, which took place in the course of the last year. I should state to the committee that, when it was ascertained that that one-shilling duty had elapsed, the parties interested became very anxious to know what his majesty's government intended to do with regard

to it—whether they intended to let it lie dormant, or to allow it to revive, as by law it would have done, on the 5th of January last. Our answer was, that at all events we should not revive the lapsed duty until the pleasure of parliament should be taken on the subject. But now, I have no hesitation in saying, that it appears to me to be incumbent upon us to recommend to Parliament to continue the reduction of that one-shilling duty, although I do not mean to say, that, if our means had not enabled us to continue the reduction, we should not have been perfectly justified in allowing the full duty to continue in operation. I should greatly have preferred carrying this reduction still further; but, in the actual condition of the country, I do not think it would be prudent or expedient to do so. At the same time I must say, that a great deal of good has arisen from this reduction, apparently small as it is; it has had no inconsiderable effect in checking the smuggling of tobacco, particularly in Ireland, where that practice is carried on to an extent beyond all imagination or belief. I do not suppose that the ingenuity of man was ever exercised to a bad purpose with greater success than it is in the smuggling of tobacco; and the committee would be astonished if I were to enter into a detail of the devices to which that most ingenious class of persons, the smugglers, have recourse in order to carry on the illicit introduction of this article; but, the reduction of the one-shilling duty has, I repeat, already had an exceedingly beneficial effect in the discouragement of the illicit traffic in tobacco; and whenever circumstances may enable us to carry the reduction still further, I have no doubt that the revenue will derive a large compensation for its first loss, not only from the increased consumption, but also from the more complete extirpation of the extended evils of smuggling. The amount of the loss resulting from the abandonment of this part of the tobacco duty, I estimate, for the whole year, at about 600,000*l.*; and although I do not mean to deny that it would have afforded me great pleasure, either to extend the amount of this particular reduction, or to apply a similar principle of reduction to other articles, I do not feel that at present I should be justified in doing so. I do not profess to be a prophet; and it would be foolish in me to hold out positive expectations on a subject liable to the operation of so many uncertain contingencies; but, when I state that during the last three years I have had the good fortune to propose the reduction of eight millions of taxes, I think I say enough to entitle me to ask of parliament to believe that I shall not be slow in carrying the principle of reduction further, whenever a fit opportunity may present itself.

There is another subject, connected with the financial arrangements of the year, to which I now wish to call the attention of the committee. I have endeavoured to show the grounds upon which I am satisfied that we are at present in a situation, not only to meet all the necessary demands that the public service may require, but to carry still further, although to a more limited extent than I would desire, the reduction of taxation. There are, however, certain other points connected with our financial system, which are of the greatest importance, and to which I think the attention of Parliament ought to be devoted with peculiar care. Gentlemen are aware how much has been said, in the course of the discussions of the present session, upon the subject of the situation in which the Bank of England is placed in consequence of its advances to government. And although I have always been ready to defend the conduct of government in respect to those advances as well as in respect to the general amount of the unfunded debt, I have never contended that it would not be a very desirable thing to diminish the amount, not only of those advances by the Bank, but also of that portion of the unfunded debt which is in the hands of the public, whenever those objects could be safely and properly accomplished. On the 5th of January, 1826, the Bank of England held Exchequer bills, upon advances to the government, to the extent of about 6,000,000*l.* These bills were independent of any which the Bank might have purchased in the market, and which they deal with as they think proper; but in the month of February, in the present year, it is well known that the Bank, at the instance of government, consented to purchase 2,000,000*l.* of outstanding Exchequer bills. The object of this measure was partly to relieve the money-market from the pressure which at that time seemed to operate with peculiar force upon this species of security; and partly in the hope that various classes of

the community, who were suffering from the forced contraction of the currency, which alarm and want of confidence had produced, might obtain a certain degree of relief from this mode of extending the general circulation. But it is quite clear, that, however willing the Bank might be to purchase these 2,000,000*l.* of Exchequer bills, it would not have been prudent for them to do so, unless they received an assurance that the amount should, if necessary, be repaid them at no very distant period; and accordingly they were informed by his majesty's government, that the amount should be repaid in the present year—I believe in the month of June. At a subsequent period the Bank consented to make advances to a large amount on goods, for the purpose of still further contributing in a more direct way to relieve the difficulties of the commercial world; and having undertaken to do so, it becomes still more important, with a view to save that corporation from possible embarrassment, that the government should provide itself with the means of giving to the Bank every facility in their operations, which can be derived from a diminution of their general advances to the government. The proposition, Sir, which I intend to submit to the committee, is, that in the course of the present year, and as early as circumstances may render it advisable, the Bank shall be repaid 6,000,000*l.* of the Exchequer bills in their possession. The committee will observe, that the Bank hold of these bills, first, the 6,000,000*l.*, which they possessed on the 5th of January last; secondly, the 2,000,000*l.*, of which they became possessed, by purchase, in February; and thirdly, rather more than 3,000,000*l.*, upon which they had made advances for the purpose of paying off the four per cent dissentients: and the total of these various sums is rather more than 11,000,000*l.* With respect to the last class of advances, however (those which were made by the Bank on account of the four per cent dissentients), provision has already been made for them by their being charged upon the Sinking-fund; and at the close of the present year they will be nearly extinguished. There remains then the sum of 8,000,000*l.*; 6,000,000*l.* of which, as I have already mentioned, I propose to pay off in the course of the present session, or as soon after as the general circumstances of the case may render advisable. In addition to what I propose to do with respect to Exchequer bills held by the Bank of England, I cannot but think that it is very desirable to effect some reduction in that portion of the unfunded debt which is in the hands of the public; I shall therefore propose a moderate reduction of the outstanding Exchequer bills of that description; and I conceive that we may carry that arrangement to the extent of two or three millions. In order, therefore, to effect these two purposes, I propose to fund, in the course of the present session, Exchequer bills to the amount of eight or nine millions. I am by no means prepared to say, that I should not be glad to see the unfunded debt reduced in a greater proportion than that which I now recommend; but I am satisfied that every one will see, that too rapid a course of reduction by means of funding, might, at this moment, be attended with great inconvenience, and lead to a very injurious derangement in the circulation of that species of security. At the same time, I can see no reason why, after the present year, when the Sinking-fund shall have been relieved from the payment of that portion of the unfunded debt which is now charged upon it, it should not be made applicable to the reduction generally of the unfunded, as well as of the funded debt. Such an application of the Sinking-fund would be strictly in conformity to its original object; for in the act by which the present Sinking-fund is established, it has been provided, that it shall go on accumulating at compound interest, until it reaches one per cent on the capital of both debts, funded and unfunded, taken together. Parliament has, therefore, already so connected the two descriptions of debt with the Sinking-fund, as to render such an application of it quite consistent with the principle of its formation; and the only effect would be, that the daily amount of stock bought in the market would be diminished—a circumstance, which, at present at least, is comparatively of no very great importance. It is my intention, therefore, either in the present, or early in the next session, to propose such an alteration in the mode of applying the Sinking-fund, as may render it, if necessary, as available to the reduction of the unfunded, as it is now to the reduction of the funded debt.

I have thus, Sir, endeavoured to state to the committee the circumstances under

which our revenue stands at present; I have endeavoured to explain the course which his majesty's government, sanctioned by parliament, have pursued during the last few years; and I have endeavoured to show the grounds on which I relied (and, as the event has fully shewn, justly relied) in framing the estimates of preceding years; as well as the grounds on which I consider myself warranted in relying now upon a prosperous future. Sir, I am not afraid or ashamed to use the word "prosperous." I say, that a nation may safely be termed prosperous, when, combining in itself all the great elements of wealth and power, it finds the legislature and the government striving, with generous emulation, to promote the development of the national resources, by correcting what is defective, removing what is obstructive, and giving life and scope to what is active. I see the foreign policy of this country confirming and extending that just and independant influence amongst other nations, which the fair dealing, the honesty and the prudence of England have heretofore entitled and enabled her to maintain. I see, year after year, the most vigilant attention paid to all practicable improvements in the construction and administration of the laws; whereby, whilst the liberty of the subject is never overlooked, justice is rendered more intelligible to those by whom it is dispensed, and more satisfactory, as well as accessible, to those for whose benefit its dispensation is intended. I see the commercial policy of the country adapted to more enlightened views, and every amendment of the system pursued with a spirit and a perseverance worthy of so good a cause, and essential to its final success. I see, that in the management of our finances, the ruling principle is, to combine a due provision for what the honour, the dignity, and the safety of the country require, with a just circumspection of unnecessary patronage, and a well-considered reduction of excessive taxation. I see all these useful measures suggested, enforced, and sanctioned by the deliberate, and I might almost say the unanimous, voice of parliament: and when in addition to all this, I see that, as respects the people at large, the light of knowledge and of reason is gradually dispelling the mists of ignorance and of prejudice, and opening their minds to a discriminating appreciation of what ought to be the conduct of those to whose care their interests are confided—am I using the language of exaggeration and over confidence, when I say, that the affairs of this kingdom are in a right and prosperous course? There may still be many difficulties to meet us on our way. We may have to undergo, as we recently have experienced, the sudden violence of the unexpected tempest;—we may have at times to encounter "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;"—but, Sir, if we have only resolution and constancy enough—

> "To take up arms against that siege of troubles,
> And by opposing—end them;"

if we pursue our path with steadine and fidelity, we shall find our dangers and our difficulties diminishing with our progress; and we shall advance with systematic regularity towards that great end of all good government—the happiness and well-being of the people.—The right hon. gentlemen concluded, amidst loud cheers, with moving—"That towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, the sum of four shillings in the pound be raised within the space of one year, from the 25th of March 1826, upon Pensions, Offices, and Personal Estates, in that part of Great Britain called England, Wales, and the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed."

Mr. *Maberly* hoped the House would not be led away by the statements of the right hon. gentleman, some of which he considered to be complete fallacies, and should, he thought, be able to prove them such, to the satisfaction of the House. The first and the greatest fallacy the right hon. gentleman had been guilty of, was his assumption with respect to the diminution of the charge of the public debt. He had gone back to 1816, and compared the revenue of that year with that of 1825; but with regard to the comparison of the capital of the debt, he had gone no further back than 1823. In that the error consisted, and the only reason the right hon. gentleman could have for the deceit was, that in 1822, an additional charge was put on the management of the debt to the amount of 2,800,000*l.*; so that, in point of fact, the amount of charge, as compared with 1819, was in the last year increased. The only obvious reduction was in the unfunded debt; but then it should be recollected, that this was effected only by increasing the debt in another shape. To pay with one hand and borrow with another was not clearing off debt. That was the second fallacy worthy the attention of the House. With re-

spect to the estimate of the revenue for the coming year, he should be most glad to go along with the right hon. gentleman, in taking it at what he had calculated; but he was afraid the calculation had not been made on sufficiently certain data. The right hon. gentleman had taken only one month of last year with one of the present. Now, he should like to have the calculation made from the 1st of January this year, to the present time, and compared with the same period of the last year. Doubting, therefore, the accuracy of the right hon. gentleman's principle of calculation, he could not place much reliance on his estimated surplus. Last year, the right hon. gentleman had told them that they were to have a surplus of 864,000*l*., and it turned out not to be a fifth of that sum; and this year they were told they were to have a surplus of 714,000*l*.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that the calculation to which the hon. member alluded was made last year, before the reduction of taxes took place, and of course the surplus was less by the amount of the taxes reduced.

Mr. *Maberly* said, that that of course would alter his argument, as to that point. Still, however, he must repeat his regret, that the right hon. gentleman had not made his calculation on the produce of the revenue up to the present period; for if it should turn out that there was a great falling off in the revenue in the month of February, the hon. member could hardly be said to have made a fair calculation. He was, happy, however, to see in the right hon. gentleman a disposition to take away any part of the unfunded debt. He regretted that it had not been done last year. The right hon. gentleman had entirely mistaken what had fallen from him upon a former occasion. He never meant to say that he could have funded Exchequer-bills, and reduce the 5 or 4 per cents at the same time. But he might have done so in subsequent years. He might have done so with great advantage to the public when the 3 per cents were between 90 and 100. He must again press upon the right hon. gentleman the dangerous nature of such securities as Exchequer-bills — he meant that class of them for which immediate payment might be required, as for a promissory note. He approved of the plan of funding nine or ten millions of Exchequer-bills, and of applying the Sinking-fund as well to the redemption of the unfunded as of the funded debt. This might be very well done, were it not for the dead-weight, as it was called, which hung upon the Sinking-fund. In his opinion, it would be better to get rid of the dead-weight altogether. It was, from the outset, a cumbersome and ridiculous measure. No persons felt more gratified than he did at the prospects of future prosperity held out by the right hon. gentleman, and he hoped they would be realized.

Mr. *Hume* said, that the eloquence of the right hon. gentleman opposite had entirely led the House away from those points to which its attention ought to have been called, and on which it should have got some more satisfactory explanation than they had heard that night. He was not then going to follow the right hon. gentleman through all his arguments, but he must object to the mode in which he had made his calculations, and the periods between which and the present he had made comparisons as to consumption and as to revenue. However, he would not have risen now but for the allusions made to his statement on a former evening. That statement was, that though so much had been talked of about the reduction of taxes, more money had been taken from the pockets of the people within the last three years than had been within the preceding years. The moment he made the assertion, it was positively contradicted by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and by the chancellor of the Exchequer. He would, however, repeat his assertion, and he would prove it to demonstration by the returns before the House. He would not follow the right hon. gentleman back to 1816, and he did not see what right he had to go to that year; but he would take the returns of revenue of the years 1817, 1818, and 1819, and compare them with those of the last three years, and it would be seen that in the latter more money was taken out of the pockets of the people than in the former. By those returns it appeared that the amount of revenue was, in 1817, 51,183,000*l*.; in 1818, 52,000,000*l*.; and in 1819, 51,000,000*l*. Now, he would admit, that many advantageous changes had been made in the mode of collecting the revenue, and the repeal of useless and injurious laws restrictive of the principles of free trade, in the last two or three years; but, in those years, the amount of revenue was—in 1823, 52,561,000*l*.; in 1824,

52,685,000*l.*; and in 1825, 52,044,000*l.*; thus making an average increase of 1,000,000*l.* per year. Now, he would ask, had the people not a right to expect that these immense sums should not be taken from their pockets in the eleventh year of peace? Was it not natural that they should in that year expect to be called on for a less sum than they were in the third year after the war? It was, he would contend, quite a fallacy to say that the public were paying less within the last three years than in the years he had named. On this ground it was that he could not consider the statement which he had heard from the right hon. gentleman at all satisfactory, as it held out no prospect of reduction of our immense expenditure. We had an army expenditure of 7,700,000*l.* Our naval expenditure exceeded 6,000,000*l.*; and adding the ordnance and miscellaneous, the whole made 17,500,000*l.* Was such an extravagant expenditure to be borne? They were told that the only reduction that would be made would be the duty on tobacco; and then they were informed that 10,000,000*l.* were to be added to the funded debt, which was before too large. Would the country be satisfied with this statement? He contended that it would not, and ought not. Neither did he think the right hon. gentleman's argument upon the consumption at all satisfactory, as a proof of the growing prosperity of the country. The right hon. gentleman had taken the consumption of 1816, which was unusually small, and compared it with that of 1825, which was extraordinarily great, and produced by causes from which the country was still suffering. He would prove, when the returns for which he had moved were laid on the table, that the right hon. gentleman's calculations about increased consumption were wholly erroneous. The right hon. gentleman had said, that there was an increase in the consumption of beer, of tea, and several other articles. Now, he should be able to show, not from the returns of a single year, but from the average of several years, that the consumption of malt, and beer, and tea, and several other articles on which they were told that a large increase had taken place, had diminished; taking, as they were bound to do, the increase of the population into consideration. He should be able to show, that the population had increased since 1788 or 1792, about 41 per cent, but that the consumption had decreased, as compared with the population. The statement of the chancellor of the Exchequer was defective, in not presenting to the House a fair view of the cash-account of the country. If a merchant wished to present a full statement of his affairs, could he be said to do so if he omitted a cash-account? Where was the cash-account here? There was none; and therefore he contended, that the statement was most unsatisfactory, for the calculation of those estimates had been made on erroneous principles. The assumption of a prosperous state of the country, from the supposed increase in consumption, was, he would maintain, a delusion; and he was surprised the right hon. gentleman was not ashamed to make such a statement. It was to assume the prosperity of the country, and to make that assumed prosperity a ground for continuing our immense expenditure. The hon. member then censured ministers for keeping up the cajolery of the Sinking-fund. They ought to give up that delusion, in order to afford relief to the country. In all the measures which ministers had adopted with respect to commercial policy, they were right, but as to finance; they knew nothing about it. He deprecated the allusion which the right hon. gentleman had made to what had passed in Scotland, for the purpose of carrying the House along with him. The anonymous author of the publication to which reference had been made, was a man who had benefitted more by the taxes than almost any one living. It was no wonder that such a person should wish to keep up the system of taxation. Any thing which fell from persons in his situation was beneath the notice of that House. With regard to the diminution in the expense of collecting the revenue, he believed he might claim some credit for that reduction. He had, for three successive years been urging ministers to effect that reduction before they attended to his remonstrances. At length, however, they sent out the commissioners to Ireland; and he would not deny that they had done great good. When he first called the attention of the House to the subject, the expense of collecting the revenue in Ireland was 26 per cent, in Scotland 16 per cent, and 9 per cent in all other parts of the kingdom. It was in vain, however, to think of any effectual reduction in the burthens of the country, until the landed interest co-ope-

rated with the other classes in insisting upon economy and retrenchment. On a future occasion, he would enter more fully into the subject. He had merely risen to enter his protest against the statement of the right hon. gentleman, lest the House should be led astray by the fallacies which it contained.

Sir *J. Newport* said, he felt himself obliged to express an opinion quite different from that which his hon. friend entertained with respect to the conduct of ministers. He thought the country was greatly indebted to the chancellor of the Exchequer, and the President of the Board of Trade, for the measures which they had adopted since they had been in office. They had effected considerable reduction of taxation, and placed matters in such a train, that a progressive reduction must take place; which would, he believed, and particularly in the case of Ireland, insure an increased revenue. The measures which ministers had adopted for reforming the mode of collecting the revenue in Ireland would work a great moral improvement in the habits of the people. He trusted that they would carry their reforms still further. The revenue jurisdiction of Ireland should be entirely abolished. In the post-office department the most scandalous abuses prevailed. Might not this be incorporated with the English department? He ventured to throw out the suggestion, and trusted it would obtain attention.

Mr. *Baring* rose to express his concurrence in the sentiments of his right hon. friend who had just sat down. Nothing, in his opinion, could be more fair or more manly than the candour of the chancellor of the Exchequer, in the speech which he had just made; and he was sure it would prove highly satisfactory to the country. Every financial statement must proceed upon some estimate; and he must be a bold man who would pretend to foretel what the revenue for the present year would be. Even the chancellor of the Exchequer, with the great judgment and acuteness which he possessed, could not undertake to say whether there would be one million or two millions deficiency in the revenue for this year. Where there were bubble fortunes, there must be a bubble revenue. The increase of trade proceeded from a momentary excitement. The general failures caused a suspension of those luxuries which had created the increase of revenue; and the revenue must suffer a proportionate limitation, which would probably be confined to the current year. Under all these circumstances, he considered the chancellor of the Exchequer's statement a very fair one. Though some of the minor points might be open to observation, yet, when looked at as a whole, it appeared so satisfactory, that he should be very reluctant to criticise particular passages. As to the surplus of 7,000,000*l.* when considered in connection with a revenue of 54,000,000*l.* comparatively it was no surplus at all; particularly when it was remembered, that 580,000*l.* was made up by the 400,000*l.* which had accrued from Irish coin, and 180,000*l.* from lotteries, both of which items would not recur next year. The hon. member concluded by observing that, upon the whole, he had never, since he sat in that House, heard a speech which had given him more satisfaction than that delivered that night by the right hon. gentleman.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* begged to explain himself upon two points. The first point was with reference to the revenue of the year. The hon. gentleman had taken him to task for admitting into the calculation for the year 400,000*l.* derived from the old coin of Ireland, and 180,000*l.* from lotteries; these being casual receipts, not to recur another year. It was obvious that these were casual payments; and then the question was naturally asked, how that deficit was to be made good next year? His answer was, that the growing progress of the other branches of the revenue was likely to make up for any deficiency of this nature. As to the question of the dead-weight, although the defence of that measure did not devolve upon him, yet he had felt it necessary to justify the government, though he was not insensible to the objections which the measure was liable to. In other circumstances than the present, he might not have been adverse to re-considering it; but now, when he must assume some reduction in the revenue, he did not think hewas in a situation to state what was the intention of government, should circumstances be favourable at the expiration of the period for which the bargain was made with the Bank. With respect, to the debt, he wished it to be understood, that he meant to fund from 8,000,000*l.* to 9,000,000*l.* of that sum; he meant to repay to the Bank 6,000,000*l.*; and thus, by buying stock or Exchequer-

bills, 3,000,000*l.* would go to the reduction of the unfunded debt in the market.

Mr. *Calcraft* did not wish to protract the debate, but he wished to make one observation with respect to the duty on tobacco. He thought the reduction of duty from 4*s.* to 3*s.* was not sufficient to prevent the smuggler from competing with the fair trader. It would, in his opinion, be advisable to reduce it to 2*s.* in order to prevent smuggling altogether. He could not sit down without congratulating the country upon the favourable statement they had just heard. Such a statement, after what had recently taken place, was most cheering.

Captain *Gordon* expressed his surprise that the chancellor of the Exchequer should have attacked the Scotch people for having objected to the removal of the Scottish revenue board to London, when, in point of fact, the great body of the people of Scotland were in favour of that measure.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, he had not blamed the Scottish people; on the contrary, he had eulogized them; and had only expressed his surprise that any man could be found in that country to oppose or find fault with the measure.

Sir *C. Forbes* could not help expressing his surprise at the attempt about to be made to alter the currency of Scotland. He hoped that those members who were more immediately interested in the welfare of that country would make a stand, and resist the plan proposed by ministers for altering the Scottish banking system. He was decidedly of opinion that any alteration would be injurious; and so long as he could get one member to support him, he should oppose it; and he hoped ultimately the measure would be abandoned. He hoped the members from Scotland would imitate the gentlemen of the sister kingdom, and stick together upon this occasion.

Mr. *Ellice* said, he could not help noticing what had fallen from the hon. baronet. The House had passed a bill which was to regulate the currency of England, and, he would ask, what right had Scotland to be exempted from a similar regulation? He was unable to comprehend why a measure highly expedient for England should not apply with equal advantage to Scotland. The hon. member for Midhurst had exclaimed against the country bankers of England; but he wished the House to notice the difference between their conduct and that of the Scotch bankers. The former, so far from asking for delay, might be said to have almost gone beyond the House. But the Scotch banks had come forward almost with a petition to that effect. Notwithstanding what had been said by the hon. baronet, he should be prepared to show, that the Banking system of Scotland had been, in a great degree, the cause of the over-trading and speculation which had been productive of so much evil. It was, therefore, too much for them to be told, that the people of that country would resist a measure which was agreed to by almost the unanimous vote of the House, and which was understood should apply to the whole kingdom. While on his legs, he wished to ask the chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he meant to make any reduction in the duty on soap, and on drugs used in the manufacture of silk?

Mr. *Bright* asked, what was to be done with the surplus of 120,000*l.*? There was one tax, which, although unproductive, pressed heavily on persons ill able to bear it; he meant the tax on receipt stamps, which he thought it would be extremely desirable to abolish.

Mr. *Huskisson* said, that when on a former night his right hon. friend had spoken of the duty on soap, he had intimated that the arrangement relative to it was this—that all who used it in the silk manufacture, should enjoy the same advantages as those engaged in the woollen manufacture; namely, that of a drawback of the duty. On the subject of dye-drugs, it could scarcely be forgotten that there had been imposed upon them no more than a nominal duty. The surplus of 120,000*l.*, which had been adverted to, was, it must be confessed, rather small, considering the large amount upon which it was calculated; and, so far from going to seek for a mode by which to appropriate it, the matter of regret was, that the surplus should be so trifling on so large a calculation. The hon. member for Aberdeen had noticed the necessity for funding seven or eight millions of Exchequer-bills. Now, even that operation, supposing there were no other, would go nigh to consume the whole of that sum. The hon. member for Abingdon had endeavoured to confuse one of the most luminous statements that had ever been delivered within the walls of that House. That hon. gentleman had

proceeded upon an entire misconception of the facts; for he had asserted nothing less than that the public debt, in amount of capital, interest, and charge, had increased since the year 1819. It had been said, that by figures almost any thing could be proved; and certainly a practical illustration of this maxim had been given by the hon. member for Aberdeen. His fallacy consisted in his asserting that the debt of the country during the past year had increased 70,000,000*l.* and upwards, with an increase upon that of 2,000,000*l.* in the form of charge. This was for the dead-weight. The payment of an annuity of 2,800,000*l.* during the next 45 years, was taken by him as an addition to the public debt made in 1825, and as belonging exclusively to that year. Upon such grounds as these it was that the hon. gentleman cried out to the government to put an end to the dead-weight. There was another argument of that hon. gentleman to which he would advert. It amounted to this: that ministers, though they reduced taxation between twenty and thirty millions, still left the burthens of the people undiminished. There was a reduction; that was admitted; but because the taxes, when reduced, were in the remaining department more productive than before the reduction, it was inferred that no relief was afforded; which amounted to saying that the people of England were as much inconvenienced by the present amount of taxation as if no reduction had ever been made; that, in fact, taxation pressed now as heavily as it did in the year 1816; that the increased consumption, in which the late repeals of taxes had enabled the people to indulge, yielding larger revenues than heretofore, was to be taken rather as a continuance of burthens, than as a relief from pressure. Now, when the whole of the duty was taken off salt, half the duty off wine, large reductions on spirits, and various other articles, the hon. member for Aberdeen jumped up, and wished the country to believe that the repeal of seven-and-twenty millions of taxes yielded a benefit equal to the repeal of only 4,000,000*l.*

The resolution was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Tuesday, March 14.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.] Earl *Grosvenor* said, he held in his hand a petition from the city of Chester, which he had been, in concert with the right rev. prelate opposite, requested to present to their lordships. The petitioners stated, that they regarded the existence of slavery as contrary to every principle of humanity and justice, and in this sentiment he heartily concurred. The noble earl complained that, from the papers on the table, it appeared that obstacles were interposed in the way of slaves obtaining their manumission. If the colonial assemblies persisted in refusing to attend to the recommendations of government for ameliorating the condition of the slaves, he trusted that fiscal regulations and other measures would be adopted.

The Bishop of *Chester* said, that having been requested to present this petition with his noble friend, he had great pleasure in doing so. He concurred in the sympathy expressed for the sufferings of the negro population of the West Indies, but he was content to leave the details of the measures for their relief in the hands of his majesty's ministers, being satisfied that, with regard to this subject, they were actuated by the same feelings of justice and humanity as the public, and were likely to proceed with more discretion and policy.

Lord *Ellenborough* said, he had a petition to present on a point connected with the West-India slavery, which had not been touched upon in the late debates on that subject; namely, the situation of free men of colour. It appeared, that according to the laws of Barbadoes and other islands, the evidence of free persons of colour could not be received against whites. In case of their incarceration on any charge, they could not be allowed to go at large, unless they obtained what was called white bail. They could not serve as constables or jurymen, and were not allowed to vote on the election of white men to offices. It was evidently absurd to talk of giving liberty to the blacks in the West Indies, if those men of colour who were already emancipated, were not allowed to enjoy the rights of free men. The petitioner was very modest in his demand. He only prayed that their lordships would institute an inquiry into the propriety of considering how far free men of colour ought to obtain relief. From this prayer their lordships would perceive that he was not a person who was inclined to dash at once to a conclusion. He was, however, a

person well acquainted with the situation of the people of colour in our West-India islands. Their lordships would readily perceive how vain must be the hope to raise the blacks in the scale of society, when the people of colour already made free were still treated as slaves. He therefore wished to ask the noble lord opposite what had been done on this subject? Was it the intention of the government to send out any instructions to the law officers of the Crown, or other authorities in the colonies, to submit to the legislative assemblies, bills for assimilating the situation of free men of colour, as to their rights, to that of the whites?

Earl *Bathurst* observed, that there was some difficulty connected with this subject. It formed a separate question from the general one relating to slavery; but it had not been overlooked, and was under the consideration of government.

CORN LAWS.] Lord *King* said, he rose to present a petition against that real dead-weight, or job of jobs, the Corn laws. On this subject he had already had the misfortune to provoke two of his noble friends. One of them had told him, that it was very improper to take the House by surprise with arguments which noble lords were not prepared to answer. On the present occasion, therefore, he should avoid any of those abstruse principles of political economy which had been so much complained of, but would confine himself to history and plain matter of fact. Turning, then, to history, he must remind their lordships of the period when the Corn laws were passed. That event took place in those dark ages of legislation, in those times of ignorance, when it was gravely declared that a one-pound note was equal in value to a sovereign. Then it was, when our political sun was in obscuration, that a law was passed to make corn and bread dear. Tradition said, that after a very expensive war, the landlords objected to pay their share of the expense. They liked the war very well, but they did not like to be called upon when the bill came to be settled. They then took counsel how to avoid paying their part of the bill. Two ways occurred to them of accomplishing that object. The first was by defrauding the public creditor; the second by taxing the consumers of corn. Now it happened, that to the first course the government objected; the public creditor was therefore saved, but the consumer of corn was sacrificed. It appeared that at this time a close alliance had been formed between the government, the landowners, and the clergy. The object of the government was high taxes; the object of the landowners high rents; and the object of the clergy high tithes. Now he believed, that with regard to rents and tithes, the landlords and the clergy were as obdurate as ever; but he was persuaded that the government would break the compact, if they could. They would willingly abandon this mode of taxing for one which would work more easily and with better effect. But it was said, how is it possible to obtain high taxes without high prices? To this he would answer, that high taxes could be paid with much greater ease, if the high prices were got rid of; for the Corn laws formed a grievous addition to the other burthens of the country, and if the public had not to pay so dear for corn, the weight of the other taxes would be more easily borne. This dead-weight thrown on the first necessary of life, reminded him of an awkward method which had been resorted to in its production. A practice, it was said, once prevailed in Ireland of fastening the plough to the horse's tail, and in that way making him drag it along. Perhaps the noble earl opposite (lord Limerick) would stand up in defence of that ancient and venerable practice; but he would advise the noble earl to consider the difference between a field ploughed by the miserable Irish horse of antiquity with the plough at his tail, and another ploughed by a well-harnessed and a well-fed horse, who could put his shoulder to the work. If he looked well to this point, he would find, that the horse yoked as horses were elsewhere ploughed, with great ease, six inches deep, while the jaded animal, with the plough at its tail, could barely scratch the ground. Now, it was precisely the same thing with the Corn laws. Like the plough at the horse's tail they were a dead-weight on the public, and damped the energies of the country. If their lordships were really desirous that it should be enabled to support a great amount of taxation, they would lose no time in repealing those laws.

The Earl of *Limerick* declared, that when the noble lord began to address their lordships, he had no intention of replying to any thing which might be said on the subject of this petition. He was, how-

ever, glad to find that the noble lord had somewhat varied his note on the present occasion, and that the "job of jobs" was no longer the sole name of the Corn laws, but that they were now called the "dead-weight." He congratulated the noble lord on this invention, and had no doubt that, during the session, some more new names would be discovered by him. The noble lord had declared, that he would not wander into the mazes of metaphysics, but would draw their lordships' attention to facts. Now, what sort of facts had the noble lord mentioned? What he had stated, was one of the greatest misrepresentations ever made in that House. He had gone back some 500 or 600 years, to look into an old musty act of parliament about a horse dragging a plough by the tail. He applauded the noble lord's deep research, but did not think it would have much weight with their lordships.

Promissory Notes Bill.] The Earl of *Liverpool*, in moving the order of the day for the second reading of this bill, observed, that it was not his intention to enter into any statements upon this occasion; because, when he brought forward the measure relating to the Bank charter, he had put their lordships in possession of the whole system which his majesty's government thought advisable to adopt with respect to this subject. Should any doubt arise with respect to the provisions of this bill, or any objection be urged against it, he should be ready to state in explanation whatever might occur to his mind. The operation of this bill was intended to be confined to England; its object was, to extinguish the circulation of notes under 5*l*. He had been asked if it was intended to extend the operation of this measure to Ireland and Scotland? He had then stated, that it was the opinion of government, that the principle ought to be extended to Ireland and Scotland; allowing, however, a larger interval, with respect to time, when it was to come into operation in those parts of the empire. He now begged leave to apprise their lordships that it was his intention to move on Friday for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the present banking systems of Ireland and Scotland. He adopted this course of proceeding, not from any alteration which had taken place in his own opinion upon this subject, but from a thorough conviction that the investigation would prove the expediency of the application of the proposed measure to those countries.

The Earl of *Carnarvon* objected to the whole of this measure; first, on account of the time at which it was introduced; next, on account of the circumstances under which it was brought forward; and thirdly, on the abstract principle, that a paper-currency founded on a metallic one was the best and the safest for the interest of this country. He also objected to it because it was intended to prevent the recurrence of such crises as that which the country had lately suffered and continued to endure, convinced as he was that it would be found wholly inoperative for that purpose. It was therefore his determination to give it a decided negative. If the measure professed to afford relief to the present distress, he should, perhaps, have hesitated before he offered any opposition to it; but when it was admitted, that it would bring no relief at present, and was hastily brought forward without inquiry, not for the purpose of meeting the existing evil, but to prevent a recurrence of it, the case was widely different. He was not for adopting measures to-day, which it might be found expedient to abandon to-morrow; and if any question brought forward under such circumstances were more calculated to produce mischief than another, it was a question affecting the currency of the country. The effect of the bill was counteracted by the principle of another measure with which it had been coupled, respecting the Bank of England. To that measure he did not object; but he felt that it strengthened his objection to the adoption of this bill at present, when the agitation which it excited in the public mind had produced the introduction of another measure before this had gone through the House. It produced the greatest effects upon the money-market at this moment. He knew, however, that that argument would be met by the observation, that the measure ought therefore to be set at rest at once. Now, he should rather say, in the present state of the money-market, let them wave all future considerations now, and apply their minds to the application of a remedy to the existing distress. But no; a different line of conduct was adopted by his majesty's government. They said they had foreseen the evils which had arrived, and therefore would apply no remedy to them. Others might do so if they pleased, and

welcome, but they would only adopt measures for the future. Now, he thought that the members of the executive government might have done more service to the country, if they had afforded the public relief more promptly; whether they did it themselves, or induced the Bank to do it. With respect to the object of this bill, he contended, that if the thing was to be done at all, it had better be done at once; otherwise, the effect would be similar to that of the memorable adjustment, as it was called, of 1819, when they came to the resolution of paying a paper debt, according to the old standard; which, instead of being an act of justice, was one of the grossest injustice; and one, towards the country at large, of the greatest impolicy. The committee, in whose suggestions that measure originated, had laid it down, that we ought to return to a metallic currency; and now, upon the occasion of the first panic, without waiting an hour, we must forthwith have recourse to this, the most important measure that could be applied to the country. He contended, that in a commercial country like this, a metallic was not preferable to a paper currency convertible into gold. The noble earl opposite had calculated, that not more than from 6,000,000*l*. to 8,000,000*l*. of gold would be necessary to replace the paper which he proposed to withdraw from circulation. Now, that calculation only applied, he believed, to England; how much, therefore, would be required for Ireland and Scotland, he could not say, but he did not think that less than ten or twelve millions would be required altogether. Whatever would be its amount, it would be considerable. Now, these seven, eight, ten, or twelve millions must be withdrawn from the productive capital of the country; and if the compound interest of that sum for the next 40 or 50 years were calculated, it would be seen what a considerable diminution would be thus produced, in what would otherwise have then been the amount of the national capital. That paper was a cheaper currency than gold, the noble earl would not contradict. Then came the question, was it as safe a one? For an answer to that question, he referred the noble earl to Scotland. It was impossible to look to the state of that country, which for forty years had no other currency than paper, without being convinced of the safety of such a circulation, when founded upon a proper system of banking. The present system of banks in Scotland had existed for upwards of a century. During that period, Scotland had made the greatest progress in the acquirement of wealth. What was the difference between the currencies of Scotland and England? Was it only that they had no metallic currency there? No; but they had chartered banks, while the banks of England were formed upon a very different system. No man would defend the circulation of the one and two pound notes which issued from such banks as these. He thought that ministers ought, before they adopted a measure like the present, to have recommended the Bank of England to sacrifice a portion of their privileges, and permit the formation of chartered banks within a certain distance of the metropolis. The noble earl contended, that the distress had been produced by excessive trading and speculation, originating in causes wholly unconnected with the paper currency. At the time of the South Sea bubble, we had no small paper currency. In 1783, we had no currency of 1*l*. and 2*l*. notes; and the pressure was at that period greater than the present. In 1793 the case was the same; although it was the fashion to attribute the state of the country at that time to the war. Thus it was clear that there were no grounds for imputing the present distress to the state of the existing currency. The noble earl had intimated his intention of imparting to Scotland the blessings of his proposed system; but the noble earl ought first to consider, whether it would not be better to place the currency in this country upon the same footing as that of Scotland, under which she had been exempt from all the evils which England had endured. He ought to consider whether, by tracing cause and effect he might not discover that it was that system which had so exempted Scotland from those evils, and find it a wiser measure to assimilate our own system to hers, instead of forcing upon her the application of our theory of 1819, or any theory at all. There were no grounds for presuming that a paper currency so established would not produce the same beneficial consequences here as in Scotland; and it would, therefore, be much wiser to adopt that than have recourse to another which, the moment it was introduced, had produced a degree of distress

that obliged its authors to relax it, even pending its progress through the House. He did not know whether the Scottish banks had received any assistance from the Bank of England during the recent pressure; but whether they had been enabled to weather the storm with or without such assistance, it equally proved their stability; for if the Bank had afforded them any aid, it showed that they possessed a degree of credit which the banks in England could not obtain.—He would now allude to some circumstances connected with the currency when the small notes were not in circulation, and nothing but the "genuine currency," as it was termed, prevailed. In addition to the loss to which a man was exposed by taking bad gold, he also suffered from clipping, and sweating, and other processes, by which the value of guineas was reduced. He remembered, that when he paid away four or five guineas, they were all weighed and rung before they would be taken, and he was generally obliged to change part of them. When paper was introduced, the greatest convenience was experienced. There was no longer any necessity for weighing. If their circulation were limited in point of extent, forgery would soon be detected. The one and two pound notes of the Bank of England were liable to forgery because of their extensive circulation; but that objection did not apply to local notes. Another objection to a metallic currency was, that it produced a greater number of robberies. At the period to which he had referred, robberies were numerous. A friend of his had been robbed on the highway, another had been wounded by a shot fired at him by a footpad, and a third had narrowly escaped with his life, by seizing the muzzle of the pistol which the robber had thrust into his carriage, and wresting it out of his hand. Since the introduction of bank notes, this description of robberies had greatly diminished. The note was numbered; it had the name of the person upon it to whom it belonged, and it furnished evidence to convict the criminal. It was, in every respect, a more dangerous property to a robber than a sovereign. When the transition took place from paper to gold, every body preferred notes, for their greater convenience, to sovereigns; although we were now apt to forget all those circumstances. He was of opinion, that no case had been established for the substitution of a metallic currency. Noble lords said, "Let us adopt the good rule, and go back to a gold currency;" but when we had, it would not save us from such evils as the present. Another objection to this measure was, that the small notes—notwithstanding all that had been said about their having caused over-trading—had contributed much more to the upholding and propping up of the agricultural interests than to the encouraging of any wild speculations or adventures. In his opinion, a paper currency, founded on a metallic basis, was preferable to any other, and formed a circulating medium far more capable than any other of being expanded or contracted as circumstances might require. Under this system the nation had made the most rapid advances to a real and solid addition to its wealth and resources. Surely, then, it ought to be well considered, whether this bill was not calculated to check that proper spirit of enterprise and speculation which had produced these beneficial results. The noble lord here went into some calculations, for the purpose of showing that the excess of paper issues during the recent feverish period of speculations, had been much too trifling to afford any pretext for ascribing to it the present disasters; indeed, the excess in the issue of small notes had only been about a million and a half, and this was all which the present bill was calculated to get rid of. But, if the present description of paper were withdrawn, would not at least half its amount be supplied by some other description of paper? He was apprehensive that if the present bill were passed, it would be most injurious to the poorer classes, and be productive of great convulsions in the country; and that their lordships would be compelled to retrace their steps. So thinking, he felt it his duty to move, as an amendment, "that the bill be read a second time that day six months."

The Earl of *Darnley* said, he could not agree with his noble friend in thinking that this measure was likely to prove injurious to the poor. Indeed, he should give it his support, because he looked upon it as the first duty of government to protect the labouring classes from the misery to which they had lately been exposed by the stoppage of so many banks. If he could bring himself to believe that its effect would be to throw a large por-

tion of them out of employment, he would hesitate in giving it his sanction, but being perfectly convinced that unless parliament afforded protection against such evils as they had lately experienced, they would be constantly recurring, he must give it his cordial support. His noble friend had somewhat misconceived the reason why highway robberies had become less frequent. It could not be owing to the want of a metallic currency, because, in point of fact, that species of currency had been in general use in the neighbourhood of London for these last four or five years, and scarcely an instance of highway robbery had occurred during that period. As to the argument, that the suppression of a paper currency would throw considerable difficulties in the way of mercantile transactions, it should be recollected, that in Liverpool and Manchester, a metallic currency had for some time prevailed, and had not produced any of the difficulties which were apprehended. He thought that ministers, by putting an end to the fabrication of paper money, would best do their duty to the country, and protect the interests of the poor. He wished to call to the recollection of the noble lord who had that evening presented a petition from the sister kingdom against this bill, the great distress which some years ago was caused in Ireland by the failure of the Cork and other banks. Indeed, he had been informed, that many of the poor Irish had actually died through want; for in that country there was not, any fund to which the starving poor could have recourse. He should give his vote in favour of the bill, because he considered it calculated to render a recurrence of the present evils impossible. Adverting to the commercial distress, he certainly thought, that government had proceeded on an erroneous principle in not affording relief in the manner in which it had been advantageously afforded on former occasions. If the noble earl and his colleagues had not pledged themselves in the last session, to grant no help to those whose commercial speculations might involve them in distress, an issue of Exchequer-bills would have had the effect, in a great degree, of restoring confidence.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, he wished to make a few observations on what had fallen from the noble earl who had moved the amendment; but, in the first place, he was desirous to reply to some remarks from the noble earl who had just spoken. That noble earl seemed to think that his majesty's government had abstained from issuing Exchequer-bills, merely because they had pledged themselves last year that they would not do so. He could assure the noble earl, that they were not so strongly attached to their own opinion, as to persevere in any system which they discovered to be an injurious one. But of this he was satisfied, that his majesty's government had never effected a greater good, than by resisting the applications which had been made on that subject. If those applications had been now acceded to, upon any future occasion, when any distress had arisen, relief would have been demanded as a matter of right. He could not but regard the precedent of 1793 as one which it would have been highly impolitic to have followed in the present emergency; for the distress which now prevailed could not be said to have occurred by the hand of God. There had been no bad harvest or other similar cause; but it was allowed on all hands, that over-trading had been the primary cause of the mischief. If future ministers did their duty with like firmness, no more would be heard of Exchequer-bills being issued for the relief of private distress. He felt persuaded, that, if the relief had been afforded by government, instead of by the Bank, it would have been as different as possible in its practical effects, and that the assistance would have got into totally different hands. The secresy with which this relief would have been administered, had it proceeded from the government, was with him the principal objection. This very secresy had a manifest tendency to encourage speculation. If relief was to be given, it was desirable that the names of the applicants for it should be generally known. He had put the question to the great deputation from Manchester, whether they wished for secresy, and their answer was, no, they were ready to accept the relief in any way it might be tendered. There could be no objection to the great Bank of the country coming forward, and giving that relief which, by its charter and by-laws, it was enabled to do. If it met with any difficulty in effecting this, then let the government do what it could towards the removing of that difficulty. Besides, if government afforded this relief to one interest, it ought to afford it to all; but the proper policy was to afford it to none, except where the exigency was

such as no human foresight could guard against. Had it been the wish of himself and his colleagues to have spent an easy session of it, nothing could be more within reach. If they had merely come forward with an issue of Exchequer-bills, they would have been hailed as the most benevolent beings, the most considerate of ministers. But instead of studying their own ease, and looking for popularity on such terms, they had, by acting up to their honest conviction, involved themselves in embarrassment; at least in parliamentary embarrassment, for such it was, as far as it went. With respect to what had fallen from the noble earl, as to the encouragement likely to be given to highwaymen by the extinction of small notes, he felt himself the more competent to approach that subject, as he had once, when a schoolboy, been attacked by a highwayman. He was very young at the time, but he remembered losing all the money he had about him. It was natural, therefore, that he should be as much alive to apprehension on that head as the noble earl. Still, with all his early associations, he was inclined to think, that the observation made by another noble earl opposite was entitled to greater weight namely, that if that was to revive with the return to a metallic currency, it would have been felt during the last four or five years; seeing that every noble lord who had travelled in the vicinity of the metropolis during that period, was in the habit of taking about with him sovereigns, and not notes. For his own part, he was inclined to attribute the almost extinction of highway robberies to the regulation introduced by him when he held the seals of the Home-office, and since improved by others; namely, the establishing a good and effective police. And although much was owing to its vigilance, he was not quite sure whether the police could effect it, were it not for the inclosure of the large commons.—As to the objection, that this bill would not have the effect of doing away with all wild speculation or over-trading, it was never imagined that those evils could be entirely remedied by this measure. It must, in order to effect this, be accompanied by other measures, one of which must be the introduction of a sounder system of banking; and although, owing to the monopoly of the Bank of England, this system could not at present be rendered as perfect as it might be after the year 1833, still that was no reason why we should not now make as much improvement in the system as it was capable of receiving under existing circumstances. The extinction of one and two pound notes would, at any rate, operate as a very considerable check upon wild and speculative projects. None of the deputations of the substantial country bankers had made any objection to the extinction of the one and two pound notes, but had declared that they would as soon be without them. But this had not been the case with the lesser bankers. To this class the small notes were a principal source of profit; consequently the present bill was calculated to do away with the lesser banks, the existence of which had a considerable effect in rendering the whole banking system suspected and insecure. It had also been objected, that the paper currency could not be withdrawn without great inconvenience. But the fact, that in London, Manchester, and through the whole of Lancashire, a metallic currency had prevailed for the last three or four years, without creating any obstruction to trade, completely refuted this objection, especially when it was considered that the Customs of London and Liverpool were three-fourths of the Customs of the whole kingdom, and that the Customs of Liverpool were equal to those of all England, with the exception of London, and that the Excise of London and Liverpool amounted to three-fifths of the Excise of the whole kingdom.—As to the objection, that the agricultural interests would be affected by this bill, he would remind their lordships, that until 1797 we had done with a metallic currency without sustaining any inconvenience; and when it was considered that we should get rid of the losses and fluctuations in the value of property which must always be attendant on a paper currency, it seemed to him that the balance of advantages preponderated much in favour of the present measure. He and his colleagues were not trying any new experiment, but simply returning to that wholesome state of things which prevailed previous to 1797; for at that period, and for many years preceding it, there was nothing but a metallic currency; and he was satisfied, that if the withdrawal of the small notes, and the introduction of a metallic circulation, did not effectually cure the existing evils, they would, at all events, have a great effect in removing them.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, he agreed

with the noble earl, that a great distinction existed between the system of the Scottish and English banks. But it was asked, why not then adopt the former in this country, instead of calling upon the Scotch to adopt the British system? The answer given to this requisition was—"We cannot, for really we do not know enough of its details." He would give another reason, and a more forcible one; namely, that it could not so easily be imitated here; for in Scotland it was founded on the best foundation for any great establishment, namely, the practice of ages. The banking system in Scotland had the confidence of the people; and when the same could be said in an equal degree of that of England, then no change would be necessary. It was idle to talk of transplanting systems from one country to another. They all knew how valuable the British constitution was to those who lived under its influence; but endeavour to transplant it to Sicily and Corsica, and see the very different manner in which it would be received by the people. With respect to the test of experience in favour of the Scottish banks, he believed that, within the last century, no greater loss than 38,000*l.* had been sustained from any accident among them. A great deal had been said, during these discussions, of the connexion between the foreign exchanges and the over-issues of paper, and much confusion prevailed upon that point. He entreated the government, when so much misunderstanding prevailed, not to seize upon so unfavourable a moment for effecting so important a change. The noble earl opposite thought, that because the course of exchange had turned against this country, it was all to be attributed to an over-issue of paper. Surely the noble earl must be aware that there were various other causes which were sufficient to produce the same result. It might be caused by the balance of trade or of payments being unfavourable to us, as well as by a depreciation of the currency. There were certain unerring marks by which it could be ascertained what the real causes were. But it should always be recollected, that the exchanges never could run against a country to a greater extent than the relative expense of the conveyance of gold from one place to the other, including, of course, the amount of agency and insurance. The exchanges had never shown a depreciation of the currency, nor could they, so long as the paper medium was convertible into gold. He repeated his condemnation of the time chosen by government for effecting the proposed change, believing as he did that the experiment would greatly aggravate the existing evils. As to the condition of the country banks, he thought their credit at that moment better than when the tottering banks were doing business. The bad ones had since fallen; and the effect of their stoppage would be beneficial to those that remained. He repeated his objections to the measure, and said that they applied more to the time of the alteration, than to the change itself.

The amendment was negatived, and the bill read a second time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, March 14.

BANKING SYSTEM IN SCOTLAND.] Lord *A. Hamilton* presented a petition from Lanark. He said, he thought it singular, after the government had so often lauded the system of banking in Scotland, and held it up for the imitation of the English bankers, that they should propose to effect a total alteration in it.

Mr. *Abercromby* said, he did not believe that the real feeling of the people of Scotland was opposed to the alteration in the currency of Scotland. On the contrary, he had reason to believe that the opposition came from persons interested in keeping up the present system. He was happy to find the whole of the press in Scotland advocating the cause of truth, and arguing in favour of the intended alteration, and acquainted as he was with the character of his countrymen, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise at the unblushing effrontery with which it was stated that the paper currency was universally believed to be intimately connected with the interests of Scotland.

Mr. *W. Dundas* thought the learned gentleman's statement proved him to be little acquainted with the present condition of his countrymen. His habits necessarily withdrew him from Scotland; and he appeared to have formed the opinions he had just now expressed from the press, which, whatever might be its other merits, was not an unquestionable authority on this subject. It was most natural that the great majority of the Scotch should be, as they were, averse to the alteration of a system under which their country had risen, in the course of a hun-

dred years, to a degree of prosperity unparalleled in history. All they called for now was fair inquiry; and with the result of that, be it what it might, they would be satisfied.

Mr. *Ellice* believed it would appear that the Scotch banks, the sound principle of which had been so much vaunted, had very materially tended to produce the mischiefs that were now felt so generally in Scotland.

Mr. *J. Smith* was enabled to state, from his knowledge of the several banks of Scotland, that they enjoyed the highest credit throughout that country.

Mr. *Maberly* believed that the Scotch nation were, from habit, so attached to the paper system, that they would refuse gold, if it was offered to them in lieu of it; but still he thought that the system ought to be altered, as a period of panic and pressure might arise in Scotland, when the mischief of such a currency would entail ruin upon that country.

Mr. *Home Drummond* had no objection to the appointment of a committee on the subject. He was quite satisfied that the petition expressed the general opinion throughout Scotland, and that there had never been a question on which that country had been so unanimous.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* thought that nothing was more injurious than keeping a country in the state of uneasiness and uncertainty which discussions of this nature must necessarily create. If he might venture to offer his advice to the chancellor of the Exchequer, it would be to leave Scotland in the state in which it now was, until he had seen how the proposed alterations of system had worked in England, where, he conceived, the right hon. gentleman had already full enough on his hands, without extending the surface of his operations, and thereby greatly increasing his own embarrassments.

Colonel *Johnson* said, he should be glad to have the real opinion of the people of Scotland on this subject. When he was in that country, he believed they had no option; for he had never seen any gold at all. If the petitions spoke the sense of the people of Scotland, he was very much mistaken. He was rather inclined to attribute them to persons who were interested in keeping up the present state of things.

Mr. *Baring* said, he should be sorry to have a notion go abroad that the committee was to be appointed to inquire into the solvency of the Scotch bankers. To do so would be inconsistent with prudence and common sense. At the same time, he had no doubt that such an inquiry might be made without any detriment to those bankers, of whose credit he had the highest opinion. The appointment of a committee on the subject might, however, be judicious; and, seeing the unanimous opposition which appeared to be made, he thought it would not be right to adopt the proposed measure without an investigation into the grounds of that opposition. The difficulty of returning to a metallic currency within the prescribed time even in England, would, in his mind, be much greater than many gentlemen imagined. It was, however, his decided opinion, that the measure would be good for nothing if it were not, sooner or later, extended to Scotland.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, it had never been his intention to submit to the House any question as to the solvency of the banks in Scotland. He was assured that they were all solvent; and if they were not, an inquiry of that nature would be as unprofitable as it would be ungracious. His only object was, to ascertain whether it would be politic to leave the small notes in circulation in Scotland, when they were abolished in England; and that he considered to be a very proper question for investigation by a committee.

Ordered to lie on the table.

EMIGRATION.] Mr. *Wilmot Horton* said, he rose for the purpose of bringing forward the motion of which he had given notice, for a select committee "to inquire into the expediency of encouraging Emigration from the United Kingdom." It would not be necessary for him to enter at length into the subject. The House would recollect, that, in the year 1823, a sum of 50,000*l.* had been voted for the purpose of enabling a certain number of men, women, and children to emigrate to the North American colonies. The number who then availed themselves of the encouragement held out by government was, in all, 268. The expense incurred by the country was 22*l.* for each person. They were now placed in Upper Canada, and from a state of wretchedness and misery, were now comfortably and prosperously situated. This experiment having so far succeeded, it

was thought advisable to extend it in 1825, and there were then sent out, including men, women, and children, 2,024 persons. The average expense of each was not so great as in 1823: it amounted to about 20*l*. The House would see, therefore, that for a sum of 20*l*. persons might be fixed in Canada, in a comfortable situation, with the prospect of independence before them, who, had they remained in Ireland, could hope for nothing but those privations, and that wretchedness and penury, in which the poor of many districts were obliged to drag out a miserable existence. The whole of those who had been sent out were in fact paupers, divested of all means of procuring a subsistence at home, and utterly incapable of providing for themselves and families. The most ample particulars connected with the subject of these experiments would be found in the reports of the committees of 1823 and 1825. It would therefore be unnecessary for him to go into them. He should content himself with saying, that the experiment of 1823 had completely succeeded, and that that of 1825 was in progress of success. In Upper Canada, the description given of the settlers by a person who might be relied upon was, that they were comfortably fixed on their land, perfectly contented with their situation, grateful for what had been done for them, making great progress, and living on the most friendly terms with the settlers who went out in 1817 and 1818. There appeared in the Canada paper a letter from a person named Fitzgibbon, one of the party who went out. Here the hon. member read an extract from the letter, speaking in high terms of the situation and prospects of his companions, and of the kind manner in which they had been received. He read another letter to the same effect, from a Roman Catholic clergyman, who accompanied them, and one from the superintendant, stating that the settlers were all comfortable, and doing well. To form an adequate idea of the misery of these poor wretches (for the emigrants who were sent out from Ireland were invariably selected from the poorest and most destitute classes), it was only necessary to refer to the reports of the evidence given before the committee on Irish affairs in the years 1823 and 1825. The hon. member here read extracts from the evidence of Dr. Doyle, the archbishop of Cashel, Mr. O'Connell, and others, all uniting, in describing the situation of the Irish peasant as being most wretched. This was a picture which, however deplorable it might be, no Irishman who heard him would say was exaggerated. He would now read a letter from one of these identical emigrants, addressed to the superintendant. The hon. gentleman then read a letter, which mentioned the prosperous condition of the writer; that he had on hand a considerable surplus of corn, meal, and other produce; and that the only inconvenience experienced was the want of a market. Such was the change effected in the habits and comforts of these poor people by a transfer from one place to another. The hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Hume) had, in 1825, protested against such experiments, as an expense to which the country should not be put, and as not being likely to be productive of any advantage. He begged to remind the House, that government never had it in contemplation to supply all the expenses necessary for carrying such experiments further. Their object was to show, by a few trials, to those who might be interested in forwarding such a system, and in removing a redundant population, the ease with which it might be carried into effect, and the good consequences resulting from it. The hon. gentleman opposite had, upon a former occasion, contended that the mother country could have no interest in retaining the Canadas. In answer to the hon. gentleman, he had endeavoured to show the advantages that might be derived from them; from the facility they afforded of remedying, in some measure, the inconveniences arising from superabundance of population. It had been observed, in reference to the subject of colonization, that the value of the commodities now taken from this country by the United States of America was seven times greater than at any period previous to the war, while they continued in the situation of a colony. The fact, however, was not so. The value of the commodities was only one half greater. The population of the United States was at present ten millions, and their consumption of English commodities was at the rate of about 12*s*. a head, while the consumption of the population of their own colonies, the Canadas, was upwards of 2*l*. per head. This, he thought, should at least make them hesitate before they received, as a

thing not to be disputed, the principle that colonies were productive of no benefit to the mother country. The hon. gentleman must be aware, that in the committee of last year one of the questions put to Mr. M'Culloch was this: If an adult man and woman, in a state of hopeless and helpless poverty, cannot be supported in Ireland for less than 20*l.* a year, and if four such can be removed for 80*l.* to the Canadas, where they may procure for themselves a comfortable subsistence, is it not clear that, when they could be thus *settled* for four years' purchase, it *would* be for the advantage of the country to send them out? Mr. M'Culloch's answer was, that, if it cost 20*l.* to support in Ireland, two persons who, by their labours, added nothing to the capital of the country, 80*l.* would be well disposed in sending away four individuals so circumstanced, provided means were taken to prevent the vacancies left by them in population from being filled up [hear! from Mr. Hume]. He understood the intimation given by the hon. member, but contended, that the condition of leaving vacant in Ireland the place which had been occupied by the emigrant, had always been entertained by the committee as inseparable from the plan of emigration. Mr. M'Culloch considered further, that the removal of poor individuals from Ireland might be carried into effect by the tenants, if the landlords gave securities to the government that the vacancies would not be supplied for the next fifteen or twenty years. He was sure a simultaneous and well-regulated emigration would not be denied to be superior to the desultory departures of straggling individuals; as the numbers who would emigrate under the authority of government would be better superintended, better supported, and better localized. He did not pretend to say whether Mr. M'Culloch's doctrine was right or wrong; but, at all events, the very first principle of emigration was, that the persons sent out should be assisted by the mother country for a certain time, until they received such an impetus as would enable them to go forward themselves. Nor could the assistance thus afforded be considered as so much lost or thrown away; for it should be recollected, that the mother country would share in the eventful advantages, and that the capital thus employed, though transferred to another place, still remained within the empire. He threw out these few observations merely for the purpose of drawing the attention of the House to the subject. The question of emigration mixed itself up with that of the colonial system; and if it were true that, in our trade with our colonies, both the parties were benefitted, it was clear that by means of emigration we should be doubly increasing the aggregate profits of the empire. He threw out this, because there seemed to be a disposition to impeach the present colonial system. He hoped that the question would be brought forward in a distinct shape, that it might be ascertained whether the system of our ancestors was to be departed from or not. He put it to the House, whether a measure which seemed calculated to convert a riotous peasantry into a class of industrious farmers and yeomen, was not deserving of consideration at the present moment, when we were devising improvements in our criminal code, and endeavouring to lessen crime. These were the grounds on which he should move, "That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of encouraging Emigration from the United Kingdom."

Mr. *Hume* said, he had no objection to the inquiry; for he felt quite satisfied that when the subject was considered by a committee, they would have a report disapproving of the expenditure of the money of the country for such an object. It never could answer for them to incur the expense of 100*l.* for sending a poor man and his family from Ireland to the Canadas. Give the poor man the 100*l.*, and he would establish himself as comfortably in Ireland as any where else. Mr. M'Culloch's opinion was not favourable to the extension of such a plan. He recollected asking him, on the committee, whether he thought the sending of 100,000 of the population from Ireland would be productive of much benefit. His answer was, that it would be no more than a drop of water in the ocean. Five hundred thousand, he said, might have some effect, provided reproduction could be prevented; for otherwise, in two or three years, we should have the same number again. The question then was, whether 2,000,000*l.* were to be expended for a temporary relief of one or two years. The inquiry proposed, would, he thought, do good, and he should therefore give the motion his support.

The motion was agreed to.

Bribery at Elections Bill.] Lord John Russell having moved the second reading of this bill,

Mr. *Wynn* said, that as he understood it, the principle of the bill was, that upon complaint made to the House, a select committee should be appointed to try the issue, and that their decision should be absolute and final. To this there was this obvious objection—that the decision of no committee could be binding upon the House. The inquisitorial powers of the House might be delegated; but not the judicial. A body might be appointed to bring in a true verdict as to fact; but the question of corruption was a question of inference. All that a committee could do, was to report to the House; and the House could then do what they pleased upon it—either proceed further, or let it sleep. The bill also gave power to present petitions of complaint within six years from the period. This he thought too long. He also objected that there was no penalty or punishment assigned to an unfounded charge. Experience ought to show them the necessity of some such thing. In 1788, it was found necessary to enact, that any person presenting a frivolous petition should pay the whole costs. Now, this bill enacted, that the public should pay the costs of the whole inquiry. This would give rise to a thousand evils, of which they had at present no idea. It would, beyond question, lead not only to vexatious but to malicious charges; and moreover, for the bringing of such charges, no penalty was declared. To the system proposed for choosing the committee of inquiry, too, he objected. The provision as to the appointment of the nominee was perfectly unfair. The nomineeship was perhaps the worst part of the existing system. Each party, in a petition of the kind in question, now named some one person upon the committee in whose discretion he thought he could confide: and that nominee invariably became a counsel in the case rather than a judge. But the noble lord's bill gave the accuser the power of appointing such a nominee, and withheld it from the defendant—an alteration which made that course partial and unjust,. which was objectionable enough already. The House had already possessed powers amply sufficient to correct bribery whenever a case of the kind was fairly made out. He never knew an instance in which the House had failed to deal severely with those against whom corrupt practices at elections had been substantiated.

Mr. *Warre* was of opinion, that, in point of principle, no fair objection could be raised against the present measure, because they all knew perfectly well, that election committees were in the habit, under particular circumstances, of making special reports, the matter contained in which gave rise to ulterior proceedings. He could by no means go along with the right hon. gentleman in his statement, that the law, in its present state, was sufficient to put an end to those corrupt and disgraceful practices which were known to be carried on in elections. The House ought to be allowed a more extended period than was now granted, for hearing complaints on the subject of bribery and corruption. The call for reform should not be confined to those only who were within parliament; it ought to reach those who were without the walls of that House. Reform was as much required amongst the electors as amongst the elected; and if the noble lord could devise a plan, by which notorious and scandalous practices of the sort to which his bill referred could be put an end to, a most beneficial object would be gained. In some of the boroughs those practices were notorious. If the provisions of the present measure were hung over them in terrorem, it would produce a very good effect. He trusted, therefore, that the bill would be suffered to go into a committee, and that gentlemen would lend their cordial endeavours to render its provisions effectual.

Mr. *Lockhart* denied that the House had, under the existing law, sufficient power to correct the evil. The right hon. gentleman had not denied that corrupt practices existed; and it was well known, that in some boroughs those practices were carried to an enormous extent. Surely such a system should be done away with.

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* thought the provisions of this bill so extremely objectionable that if any member would divide the House, he would vote against the second reading. Its principle went to keep alive, in all the boroughs, a state of never-ceasing dissention, and to involve the House in litigations without end.

Mr. *N. Calvert* observed, that every means ought to be taken to put down bribery at elections. The right of voting ought to be considered as a trust, and not treated as if it were a property; and the

moment the electors of any place were found guilty of corrupt practices, they ought to be disfranchised. The hon. gentleman adverted to a case in which it was clearly proved that the election of an individual was secured by a plentiful supply of new Bank of England notes, that individual being connected with the Bank.

Mr. *Pearse* defended the Bank of England from having any knowledge of the transaction to which the hon. member had alluded.

Mr. *N. Calvert* said, he happened to be on a committee, where it was proved that new Bank notes came down to the election in consecutive numbers, and some of them were traced to the voters.

Mr. *Wynn* said, he had ever supported the principle of disfranchising whenever abuse could be proved; but he was in doubt whether the present bill was calculated to remove or to promote the evils which it proposed to remedy.

Colonel *Davies* reminded the House, that the proof of a single act of corruption, in an individual elector, vitiated the return of the candidate whom he had supported. Would hon. members say, that the corruption of an individual should be held as the act of all his fellow electors, and sufficient to disfranchise the entire borough?

Mr. *W. Smith* thought that the evil which this bill was intended to repress required correction. Some years ago he had had a negotiation for one of those open boroughs, as they were called; but when he came to inquire into the business, he found that the former member had promised 10*l.* to each of the electors, which debt had been left unpaid. Now, what was the new candidate called on to do? He was told, that he must put into the Post-office a certain number of 10*l.* notes, directed, under cover, to such and such persons, before he could proceed further. How they were to be afterwards disposed of, the candidate, of course, could not exactly say, though he could easily guess. Any person paying the least attention to election proceedings in many places, must see that corrupt practices were carried on, although, in most cases, it would be difficult to bring the charge home to any individual.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that an intelligence had gone abroad on this, as well as on other subjects, which rendered it impossible that the law should be continued in its present state. He saw no great force in the observations of an hon. gentleman, that the electors ought to reform themselves; because it was evident, that if there were none to offer bribes, none could be bribed. The House ought, therefore, to begin with those who were desirous of procuring seats in parliament. The law ought to be so framed as to make it impossible for any person to introduce himself into parliament by base and dishonest means. The state of the law was extremely imperfect; and, in many instances, the House had not neglected its duty, but was unable, in consequence of that state of the law, to perform it. There was a striking instance in that House, at the present moment, of the inefficacy of the law. A petition was presented against the return of a certain borough, and one of the individuals connected with that election was sent to prison, while the other took his seat in that House, where he still remained, although there was little difference in the two cases. He knew not whether the noble lord's bill would have the effect which was contemplated; but he would support it, because he was glad to see the House taking any step on this subject, considering, as he did, that bribery at elections was the root of every evil which afflicted the country. It was notorious that corruption prevailed to a very great extent. There was a standing order of that House forbidding the interference of peers in the election of members of parliament; but it was well known that it was not regarded. His hon. friend needed not to have introduced the statement relative to the borough, the electors of which were to be paid up their 10*l.* arrears. It was not necessary to point out isolated cases, when it was well known that many gentlemen who sat in that House were only representatives of their own money. One individual, who had distinguished himself as much as any individual of the age, had paid 1,000*l.* a-year to serve as member for a place which he never saw. When he heard gentlemen congratulating one another on the purity of parliament, and gravely declaring that there was no necessity for reform, he could not help thinking of the words of Cicero: "I wonder how one augur can ever meet another without laughing." In like manner, he wondered how, on such occasions, one member of parliament could look in the face of another without laughing. When the whole system was one great blot, he knew not where to commence the cleansing process; but he

would always support the efforts made by others for that purpose, although they might fall short of his own views and wishes.

Mr. *F. Palmer* was perfectly convinced that some sort of reform in parliament, for which the people had been calling for the last twenty years, ought to be introduced. The people looked to that House for such a reform; and, if the House did not reform itself from within, it would ultimately be reformed from without. In saying this, he was making use of an old expression; but such was, in his opinion, the feeling which pervaded the people.

Lord *J. Russell* said, that the statements which had been made that night, proved that some measure of the kind was absolutely called for. The general election was fast approaching, and no doubt could be entertained that bribery and corruption were now going on. This rendered it the more necessary to make a speedy alteration in the law. It was notorious, that the returns to that House were, in many instances, made in virtue of money, and nothing else. He did not mean to make any remark on what had fallen from the hon. member for Hertford, or the hon. member for Devizes, relative to the Bank; but it was a remarkable circumstance, that when the hon. member for Penrhyn (Mr. Grenfell) had apprised his constituents, that he would decline making any advances to that borough, if likely to be attended with pecuniary expense, a person connected with the Bank immediately went down to form a connexion with that place, where he was not at all known; and it certainly was doubtful, whether some of the newly-issued Bank of England notes would not find their way to Penrhyn in the course of the next election. While such notorious practices were carrying on, was it not the duty of the House to take steps to check them? He had himself known instances in which the electors, when the member had been in the House for fourteen days without any petition being presented against his return, had come forward and said, "the fourteen days are now over, and we call upon you to pay us for returning you." Such disgraceful conduct ought to be put an end to. He did not know that his bill would have the complete effect, but he hoped that it might be so modeled as to answer the purposes for which he intended it. The high tone of feeling in the country on this subject, and the improved state of society, warranted him in saying, that this bill, or one of a similar nature, must finally be carried.

The Bill was then read a second time.

Mutiny Bill—Flogging in the Army.] On the order of the day for the third reading of the Mutiny bill,

Mr. *Hume* observed, that the feeling of the country, which had been so pointedly referred to in the discussion of the question just now disposed of, was, without question, diametrically opposed to the system of military flogging. He hoped the time would soon arrive, when Englishmen would no longer be the only European subjects whom it was thought necessary to goad to the completion of their duty with the whip. Why should it be presumed that British soldiers would fail in that sense of honour which animated all other troops? The reason was to be found in the very nature of the punishment. They brutalized men by their discipline, and then complained that the men acted as brutes. He protested against the continuance of the system.

Mr. *Hobhouse* congratulated himself on having been one of the minority of forty-seven who voted against flogging the other evening. He felt the more justified in that sentiment, by the recollection that his hon. colleague (sir F. Burdett) when he first introduced the subject to the House, was one in a minority of six at the utmost. Last year the minority was considerable, and this year more so. After the holidays, he proposed to move for returns for two different periods, which would show the progress which this subject had made in the public mind. It was highly satisfactory to know the opinion entertained of it by the commander-in-chief and several of the first generals of the army. But if, according to the opinion inculcated by those high military authorities, and enforced by their practice, the discipline of the army had notoriously improved by the relaxation of that inhuman mode of punishment, how could gallant officers assure the House that it was necessary that the power of inflicting it should remain with the officers of the army? The House must feel great deference for the opinion of practical men, but could not listen to them when they proposed to the House to act upon what they considered to be a safe understanding as distinguished from feeling. The fact was, that the House would be safer

in legislating upon feeling, which in such a case would be an indication of the soundest general opinion, than upon understanding taken in hostility to feeling. He hoped to live to see the day when those who abetted the continuance of this discipline would be ashamed of their former opinions, and feel glad that more humane sentiments had prevailed.

The bill was then read a third time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, March 15.

COMMISSIONERS OF BANKRUPTS — TAVERN EXPENSES.] Sir *Robert Wilson* rose to bring forward the motion of which he had given notice. It was one of considerable importance to the trading world, as being a feature in the heavy list of charges to which the estate of a bankrupt was liable in transitu to his creditors. The tavern expenses incurred by commissioners of bankrupt in working commissions in the country were enormous and illegal. It was desirable that so wanton an expense should be put a stop to. The best means of judging of the extent to which this abuse had been carried, was by ascertaining the amount of expenses incurred within the last three years. This might be attended with difficulty, but it was not impracticable. There was an officer called the secretary of bankrupts, upon whom the House might call for all the information in his power, and he again might be required to address circulars to all the solicitors for country commissions within the last three years, to deduct from the mass of items the particular expense of each commission, and the whole might be arranged by the secretary and presented to this House. He concluded by moving, "That there be laid before the House an account of all Tavern Expenses incurred by commissioners of bankrupts under commissions executed in the country for the last three years."

The *Solicitor General* observed first, upon the difficulty of complying with the motion; and, secondly, upon its irrelevancy, as all the abuses (if any existed) were provided against by act of parliament. If the commissioners were guilty of any abuse, they were liable to be disqualified, upon complaint made to the Chancellor. The law was not, therefore, defective, and there appeared to him no necessity for the returns.

Mr. *Abercromby* reprobated the wanton accumulation of expense which these illegal indulgences of the commissioners occasioned. He held in his hand the bill of costs of a bankrupt commission, in which there were dinner bills to the amount of 47*l.* Now this was a serious abuse. He was aware that if the commissioners participated in the abuse, they were disqualified from acting; but what he complained of was this, that the commissioners themselves were made judges of their own conduct; for the bills of costs in which these expenses were charged were positively taxed before the commissioners. So much for the legal redress. The whole amount of costs in the commission to which he had alluded was 2,000*l.*

Mr. *W. J. Bankes* contended, that the law as it stood was sufficiently remedial. It should not be forgotten that the commissioners acted under an oath, and that if they winked at abuses, they would be guilty of perjury.

Mr. *Hume* said, it was no answer that there existed a law on the subject, if that law was not carried into effect. Two years ago a return was laid on the table, by which it appeared that 224,000*l.* had been expended by the commissioners of land tax, in open defiance of five acts of parliament.

Mr. *S. Bourne* thought the gallant member should confine the return to the year which had elapsed since the passing of the act alluded to. The abuses complained of were a gross violation of the law, and he did not know why proceedings should not be instituted against the persons guilty of them.

Mr. *Bankes* said, if the gallant member would confine himself to the date when the law began to operate, he would not object to it.

Mr. *Wynn* said that, according to the terms of the motion, the parties were bound to make a return, even of the expenses which they paid out of their own pockets. Now, it would be better to direct prosecutions to be instituted against the persons guilty of such offences, than to call upon the whole body to make admissions which would expose them to prosecutions.

Sir *R. Wilson* said, he had no objection to confine the return to the time when the act came into operation last year.

The motion was agreed to.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Thursday, March 16.

USURY LAWS.] The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, he held in his hand a petition from the same body in Manchester from which, a few days before he presented a petition in favour of the bill, for putting an end to the circulation of small notes. The petitioners thought the subject was materially connected with that bill; and he could not but think that it had, if not directly, at least indirectly, a connection with it, as it related to the subject of commercial distress. The object of this petition was, to call their lordships' attention to the Usury Laws. Those laws had certainly greatly aggravated the distress which prevailed among the mercantile classes. Few of their lordships could be aware of the great loss of capital and loss of interest, which had taken place, within the last six months, in consequence of that unfortunate attempt of the law of England to fix the value of capital,—to make that fixed which was in its nature unfixed and variable. This constituted a state of things which had been the ruin of many individuals; but he spoke not now so much with reference to the effect of the law on the landed interest as to its operation on commerce. Such was the state of the law, that if persons found it necessary to borrow money they could not do so on terms above the fixed rate. What was this but saying that they might borrow money when they had no occasion do so; but that when their exigencies required them to borrow, the law should step in and shut them out from that resource? Thus, in times of great pressure, the law compelled persons in difficulty to resort to the most ruinous terms. This was as inconsistent as it would be to say to a person insuring his life, that no insurance should be effected for less than ten years' purchase. The principle was the same as telling such a person, that when he was in good health he might effect his purpose, but that at a moment of sickness or in advanced age, when insurance became the more necessary for the sake of his wife and children, he should then be deprived of the opportunity of taking such a step. He defied any noble lord to show that there was the least difference in principle between a law which would prohibit the insurance of life at such value as might be put upon it, and one which prevented a man from placing what value he pleased upon his capital. The profit on capital must, like every thing else, depend on the relation between the supply and demand; and if sound principles of commerce were followed, the interest of money would always readily adjust itself to the state of trade. To try to fix it by law, to impose a maximum, was as vain an attempt as to fix the mercury in the barometer. The most advantageous course for individuals, and the best policy for government, was to allow the value of capital to adjust itself to the wants of commerce. On this subject he concurred with the sentiments expressed in the petition, which was from the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, he had had an opportunity of learning the sentiments of the petitioners, at a meeting which took place some time ago, when certain persons belonging to the same body as the petitioners, applied to government to learn whether it could not afford relief to the existing commercial distress. Those persons assured him that they should not have made, nor would they have had pretence for making, application to government for relief, had it not been for the circumstances in which they were placed by the Usury Laws. Now he was aware that obstacles stood in the way of abrogating those laws altogether, in consequence of their bearing on particular interests; but, notwithstanding this, he was of opinion, that at no distant day their lordships must give their best consideration to the state of those laws. The question was one of much difficulty, but the present state of the law could be defended on no sound principle.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Thursday, March 16.

EAST INDIA COMPANY.—APPOINTMENT OF WRITERS.] Mr. *Wynn* rose to bring forward his motion, respecting the appointment of writers in the service of the East India Company. By the act 53 Geo. 3rd, c. 155, no person could be appointed a writer, who had not passed four terms at the East India college. Since the establishment of that college, from the extension of the company's territories, the necessity of appointing an additional number of Zillah officers in Bengal, and other causes, there had been a deficiency of qualified persons. It was found also,

that there was a disposition on the part of qualified persons to conceal their qualifications, in order to prevent their being sent a hundred miles into the interior. Hence there was an arrear of not less than 75 writers, and it was calculated that 50 would be required this season. The present establishment of the college did not admit of supplying this number. His object, therefore, was, to suspend the operation of the clause in the statute referred to, in order that persons might be selected who had not passed their four terms, but who were duly qualified. This measure was not intended to imply a distrust of the system pursued at the college. He believed that system had fully answered its purpose. If the question related to the new constitution of the college, he should decidedly prefer its being assimilated to our existing universities; as he conceived it was much less advantageous to persons to be educated in classes, than to be mixed together. At the same time, he considered it highly creditable to the establishment that in the short space of two years the students acquired so much. The other point embraced by the bill he was about to move for, respected the payment of allowances, on account of officers dying when absent from India. The act of 53 Geo. 3rd. provided that certain allowances should be paid to officers, while absent from India, on account of ill health, for a period not exceeding three years; but beyond that time no allowance was granted. This was a considerable hardship on those officers whose state of health rendered it impossible for them to return to India within the prescribed period. They ought to be allowed to draw some allowance, if necessary for their support, beyond that specified period: otherwise, the chance was, that they would get into difficulties, and the time given them for the recovery of their health would be absolutely lost. By going back to India within three years, those individuals would be entitled to claim a certain allowance, under the act of parliament. Many officers had done so, in consequence of the state of the law, before their health was completely established, and the consequence was, that they had fallen victims to disease. The object of the bill, in this respect, would be to give to officers going to the Cape of Good Hope or to Ceylon on account of ill health, the same allowances as if they were in India, and also to provide for the payment of allowances on account of officers dying while absent from India on account of ill health. The right hon. gentleman concluded by moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to suspend such part of the act of the 53 of Geo. 3rd. c. 155, as relates to the appointment of Writers, and to remove doubts as to the payment of allowances of officers dying while absent from India."

Mr. *Hume* said, that what had been stated by the right hon. gentleman cast, in his opinion, a strong reflection on the East-India company's institution at Haileybury. He thought that the whole of the system on which that institution was founded was exceedingly injurious. The young men were shut out from all society, and had no opportunity of acquiring the least knowledge of the world. Such a system was calculated to destroy the native character of Englishmen. The speech which lord Grenville delivered in another place, against the formation of this college, did him the greatest honour. The arguments adduced by that noble lord were conclusive against the system; and experience had amply proved, that the noble lord's view of the subject was correct. He clearly showed what would be the result of such a system. Year after year disturbances had taken place in that college, and the young men acquired any thing but that high tone of honour, principle, and public spirit, which they ought to imbibe, to fit them for the high situations which they were destined to fill. He had often deplored the situation in which India was placed, in consequence of the formation of such an establishment. Young men were sent out to act in the most important capacities, without any general knowledge of the world. Individuals were cooped up in that secluded monastery, as he might call it, where they could acquire no knowledge of active life. Young men of twenty-two years of age, were raised to the rank of judges in the Zilla courts; many of which had jurisdiction over a space larger than Yorkshire. For five successive years, attempts had been made, in the court of proprietors, to alter the system which prevailed as to the education of writers; but every attempt had failed. He was glad therefore that government had at last taken up the subject. He hoped, however, that the right hon. gentleman would select some proper mode of examination for persons going out to India. He wished persons

educated in the college, as well as those educated out of it, to be subjected to the same test. He was surprised that some measure of this nature had not been before resorted to. But, the fact was, that the court of directors had no will of their own. They were obliged to obey the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wynn), or any other right hon. gentleman who might fill his situation. Every public servant sent out to India ought to be qualified to perform the duties attached to his situation. The business of the college was better conducted now than formerly; still, he must express his decided conviction, that it never would answer the purpose for which it was originally intended. It was only so much brick and mortar, and the expense incurred by keeping the establishment up ought to be done away.

Captain *Bradshaw*, adverting to the practice in India relative to Cadets, said that it was usual to make regular reports of their advancement in a knowledge of the language; and adverted particularly to the case of one individual, who was so inattentive to the study of the Hindostanee, that he (captain B.) was directed to inform him, in the presence of the other young men, that the commander-in-chief would not appoint him, if he did not make himself master of the language. The consequence was, that the next day he sent for a Moonshee, began to study, and in a short time was as perfect in the language as any of his fellow cadets.

Sir *T. Baring* said, that a cadet could obtain a more perfect knowledge of the native language by a six months' residence in India, than he could by two years' study in this country. He thought upon the whole, that if individuals were allowed to receive their education at such places as their parents or friends thought best, the company would have the best guarantee that their servants would be educated and effective men. He hoped, therefore, that the right hon. gentleman would make his alteration permanent.

Mr. *C. Grant* trusted that his right hon. friend would only make this a temporary measure. The whole of the complaints made against Haileybury College rested on vague report. That institution had been opposed by those who obstinately adhered to the former system, merely on account of its having long prevailed, and who were adverse to any improvement, which they regarded as a dangerous innovation; and likewise by a certain class of the company's servants in India, who conceived that it would militate to their prejudice. It had also opponents in the court of directors, and of proprietors. Much had been asserted about the irregularities which had occurred in that establishment. On this point he would only say, that those irregularities were not greater in number or degree than were to be met with in other seminaries of the same magnitude. He would not enter into the number of minor complaints which had been alleged against this establishment; but he would contend, that since it was founded there had been a marked improvement in the conduct and character of the company's servants in India. Instead of dealing in vague assertion, he would quote the sentiments which men of very great talent had expressed as to the usefulness of this institution. In 1810, lord Minto spoke highly of its usefulness; a few years after, colonel Roebuck gave testimony of a similar character; the marquis of Hastings had expressed his approbation of the College in the most unqualified terms. And this night, his right hon. friend had stated, that every communication which he received from India more strongly convinced him of its usefulness. Some gentlemen were of opinion, that it would be sufficient for every purpose, if individuals going out to India were obliged to submit to some common test. There appeared, at first sight, something very plausible in this; but this test could apply to nothing but literature. It could have no reference to scholastic discipline, to moral character, or to propriety of conduct. Besides, gentlemen must feel how easy it was to procure a certificate of proficiency, under such a test as had been alluded to. Therefore, leaving out of the question the habits of moral discipline which the present system produced, even in a literary point of view, the mode of education, which was advocated by the opponents of Haileybury College, would be extremely defective. When individuals spoke of the proficiency which a young man ought to obtain before he proceeded to India, he took it that they adverted to the lowest degree of proficiency — to that which might be fixed as a minimum. Now, it was quite evident to him, that that minimum would be both the minimum and the maximum. There would be no inducement to make a young man ac-

quire any knowledge beyond that which was necessary to carry him through his examination. Where there was competition, as was the case at present, the result was very different. Now, he begged to ask, what was to be done with the patronage of the East India company, if the existing system were abandoned? Was it meant to throw open the writer-ships to all the young men of the country? Were they to be made the reward of successful competition? If so, the question must be argued on other grounds. At present, those appointments were made by the directors of the East India company, and were granted at their will. Every appointment was viewed, not as a matter that was to be contended for, but as a vested interest which some individual had already obtained through his connexion. So far from its being looked upon as a thing that might be contended for, many cases could be adduced, where, even when some delinquency was proved, it had been considered a great hardship to deprive the student of that which had been promised to him. This was a very nice point to deal with. The present system, he conceived, was well calculated for sending out efficient servants to India; but, if a better could be devised, be the expense of time or money what it might, he certainly would support it.

Dr. *Phillimore* believed that Haileybury college had fully completed its functions by furnishing India with a supply of well-educated young men for the civil and military services. At the time of establishing the college, there was a great deficiency of the proper means of education. Never did any functionaries acquire more honour and credit than the young men sent out from the college.

Mr. *Trant* said, he did not think so highly of the education in this college. His experience of the effects of it in India led him to prefer the education at the Universities.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

Scotch Banking — Small-Note Currency in Scotland and Ireland.] The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* said, that after the very ample discussion which the subject of the Small-note Currency had recently undergone, and after the decided manner in which the House had expressed its opinion on the general principle of the policy of making the basis of our currency more practically metallic than it was at the present moment, he should think it unnecessary to trouble it at any length on the present occasion. He confessed that the more he applied himself to the consideration of the subject, the more he had become persuaded that there was no substantial ground on which it could be maintained, that the other parts of the United Kingdom ought to be put on a different footing from England, if it were right to adopt this system at all.

But he was ready, notwithstanding, to admit, that there might be, with respect to Ireland, and particularly Scotland, circumstances of difference which it was requisite the House should take into consideration before they proceeded to any legislative enactment. He certainly felt that, in matters of this kind, in which the feelings of any large portion of the community were so strongly entertained, and so decidedly expressed, as the opinions and feelings of Scotland had been with respect to this measure, it was but conformable to the course the House was in the habit of following, to give a fair and reasonable opportunity to those who thought their interests likely to be affected, of proving the injurious manner in which they conceived they would be affected by the proposed extension of the measure, and, on the other hand, to enable those who held an opposite opinion to prove that there was, in fact, no ground for apprehension or complaint. It appeared to him, therefore, that the most prudent and effectual mode of attaining the object of all parties would be to allow a full, free, and unreserved consideration to be given to the subject before a select committee. It certainly did so happen, that in former committees which had sat on the subject of the currency, although they had gone fully into the general question, as between Bank paper and gold, this particular point, the small currency, was not debated, and certainly, as it affected Scotland, the question was not at all adverted to in the report of the committee of 1819; and that branch of the subject had undoubtedly not undergone that sort of investigation which the importance of it justly entitled it to. With regard to himself and those who agreed with him in the general opinion he had ventured to pronounce on this subject, he would say it was not fair to charge them, either as respected Ireland or Scotland, with taking up the consideration of this question improperly. In discussing the subject hitherto, it had been over-

looked, that the very first measure of restriction upon a small-note currency had been framed with exclusive reference to Scotland; for, in the year 1765, an act passed, declaring that the circulation of small notes in Scotland, under the value of twenty shillings, was incompatible with the prosperity of the country. The measure now in contemplation had only for its object, an extension of that principle. It could not, therefore, be maintained, that a measure which promised benefit to the United Kingdom, and the principle of which was admitted by Scotland on a former occasion, without a murmur, could now be injurious to that country, and ought to be resisted. With respect to Ireland, he should only say, that it did not appear to him that there existed there so strong an objection to the measure. Indeed with reference to that country, the question was different; for it oddly enough happened, that the only time at which the Irish parliament had thought proper to prohibit a small-note currency, was in 1799, after the Bank of England had been restrained from cash payments. In 1804, an act of the imperial parliament restored to the bankers the power to issue small notes. He was at a loss, therefore, to conceive on what ground the measure could be objected to. However, as there seemed to be a general impression, that the subject should be thoroughly investigated; as he was confident that the more it was investigated the more it would be approved; and as it was obvious that we should arrive at a more satisfactory conclusion, by a mode which would prevent discussion, and consequently avoid exciting angry passions, which, on every account, it was most desirable should not be called into action, he would move "That a select committee be appointed, to inquire into the state of the circulation in promissory notes under the value of 5*l.* in Scotland and Ireland, and to report their observations and opinion thereupon to the House, with reference to the expediency of making any alteration in the laws now in force relating thereto."

Mr. *Hudson Gurney* said, though he felt that it was the desire of the House not to enter into any general discussion of the subject at that time, yet he could not sit there and hear the proposal for a committee made, without expressing his opinion of the great inconvenience which the appointment of these committees must always produce, from the general uneasiness and unsettlement of men's minds, which they invariably occasioned. The bullion committee of 1810, and the committee of 1819, were of this most pregnant instances; and he most sincerely wished that, without any committee at all, his majesty's ministers had come to the determination of leaving Scotland in quiet, till they had ascertained how their new system had operated in England. It was quite evident, that if gold were to be supplied to take the place of paper, every extension of surface was increase of difficulty, and increase of the pressure on England, from whence the gold must be drawn, as well as on Scotland. In the present situation of Ireland, there could certainly be no wisdom in adding to embarrassment there; and he could conceive no reason whatever for enforcing simultaneously this uniformity of system, whether ultimately desirable or not. It ought to be remembered, that Scotland had gone on, for more than a century, under its present banking system, whilst England had a specie circulation; and no inconvenience had ever been known to arise to either country from that diversity of custom. Something of the same nature had taken place here. The mere introduction of a golden circulation into the districts surrounding the metropolis had occasioned so great a pressure, that the small notes had been continued to the country; and from this difference of circulation, he had never heard that any practical inconvenience had arisen. In fact, the Scotch system of paper credits, dangerous in itself, in his opinion in the extreme, and of paper currency to meet them, had so interwoven itself with every transaction between man and man, in that country, that he must repeat, in his view, it was, at the present moment, of the greatest possible imprudence to agitate the question, before the experiment had been fairly brought to issue in this country, in the first instance.

Mr. *Keith Douglas* said, that parliament ought to show some deference for the petitions which were coming up from all parts of Scotland, in opposition to the proposed alteration of their currency. During the whole period of the Scotch banking system nothing had occurred to warrant the proposed interference in their concerns. The state of things which had arisen in England, and called for a change, sprung from the late panic, occasioned in part by the insolvency

of some of the smaller bankers: but not so in Scotland, where the people were perfectly satisfied with the solvency of their bankers, and the accommodation which they afforded. In England, the evil to be corrected was, the too great extent of the small bank-note system; and the remedy to be applied was, the suppression of all notes under 5*l.* leaving their place to be supplied by gold. But then, it was said, that for uniformity's sake, the same system should be extended to Ireland and Scotland, and particularly to the latter; for if the small-note circulation were still upheld there, it must necessarily interfere with, and injuriously affect, the British gold currency, by being mixed up with it. Now, he denied that this could ever take place in the manner apprehended; for nobody in England would countenance the circulation of Scottish notes in preference to their own gold coin. The hon. member then entered into a brief history of the Scotch banking system since its establishment; and pointed out, that as no inconvenience whatever had been found in its practical operation, it was most unwise to meddle with it. As to the appointment of the proposed committee, feeling the case of Scotland to be so strong, he should not oppose it. All he hoped was, that the proceedings of the committee would be so directed as to avoid mischief. Care ought to be taken that, while they were investigating the system, no discredit was cast upon individual institutions. The subject in that point of view, was one of extreme delicacy.

Captain *Gordon* contended, that no good could arise from the appointment of a committee. The very circumstance of inquiry led to the presumption that there was something unsound in the Scotch system of banking. But, that that was not the case, he had the authority of the first lord of the Treasury and of the chancellor of the Exchequer, who now proposed the inquiry. They said in their communications with the Bank—"We have a further proof of the truth of what has been advanced, in the experience of Scotland, which escaped all the convulsions which have occurred in the money-market of England for the last thirty-five years, though Scotland, for the whole of that time, has had a circulation of one-pound notes, and the small pecuniary transactions of that part of the United Kingdom have been carried on exclusively by means of such notes;" and, in another part of the same communication—"The failures which have occurred in England, unaccompanied as they have been by the same occurrences in Scotland, tend to prove that there must have been an unsolid and delusive system of banking in one part of Great Britain, and a solid and substantial one in the other." And again—"In Scotland there are not more than thirty Banks, and these Banks have stood firm amidst all the convulsions in the money-market in England, and amid all the distresses to which the manufacturing and agricultural interests in Scotland, as well as in England, have occasionally been subject. Banks of this description must necessarily be conducted upon the general understood and approved principles of banking." With such authority for the excellence of the system, what necessity was there for inquiry? Were ministers persuaded that they had then formed an erroneous opinion? Had any new light broke in upon them since they penned these sentences? If not, what was it that they wished to inquire into? If it was into the actual currency of Scotland, every Scotch member could inform them, that it was paper. The only question, therefore, was, whether it was desirable to alter it? And that was one of great magnitude. Scotland had prospered under the present system, and was prospering; and he thought that, with the unanimous voice of the country against any interference with it, it must be considered a strong measure. He regretted that the question had been agitated at all. It had already produced a considerable degree of distrust and want of confidence in the public mind, and would produce still more, if persevered in.

Mr. *W. Dundas* thought, that government deserved thanks for its conduct on this occasion. He was astonished at the objections brought forward by some hon. members to a committee of inquiry. That inquiry was not, whether the banking establishments in Scotland were in a solvent condition or conducted on sound principles, but whether the withdrawal of the one-pound notes would be hurtful to its interests. The members from the northern part of the empire thought that no evil could result from circulating them; but would others take their mere words for the fact? He looked with attachment to a system which had prevailed for upwards of a hundred years, and under which his

country had prospered; but if that system were weak, he was willing to surrender it for a better. Feeling his case strong, he courted the fullest investigation. To dread it was a sign of weakness.

Mr. *Home Drummond* was glad the chancellor of the Exchequer had so candidly admitted the existence of the feeling on this subject, which, be it right or wrong, most certainly did prevail in Scotland, and which, notwithstanding what had been said to the contrary, was so universal, and so strong among persons of all opinions on other subjects, that he did not think he could have been persuaded, in opposition to that feeling, to vote for any measure at present to alter the system of currency now established in Scotland, even if his understanding had been convinced of the propriety of the change; while it is admitted on all hands, that no paramount necessity calls for any immediate interference. To a committee of inquiry, however, he could have no objection, which could tend only to bring out the truth; and he was sure the Scotch banks had no reason to shrink from any investigation of their system. This was not a fit time to enter into details—that would be the business of the committee. But he could not allow this opportunity to pass, without observing, that he did not join in the complaints of which, of late, so much had been heard, as to the grievances of Scotland. He was much more inclined to boast of the advantages she enjoys. He desired for himself, and he believed he might say on the part of every Scotch member of that House, to disclaim all feelings of jealousy of English influence or English interference, [hear, hear]. He had never entertained such a feeling at any time, and never felt less inclined to entertain it, than at present. If we consider what Scotland was before the Union, distracted and impoverished by civil broils and dissensions, and borne down by oppression of every form and degree, and trace its history onwards to the present time, instead of a catalogue of grievances arising from her connection with England, we find a long catalogue of benefits and blessings, to which no Scotchman, who allows himself to think coolly on the subject, can look back with any other feelings than those of unmingled gratitude and respect for the wisdom and the bounty of the British parliament.

Mr. *Maurice Fitzgerald* said, he had not, on the one hand, been insensible to the disadvantages of the proposed alteration of the law with respect to Ireland, at the same time that he did not participate in that spirit of resistance, or rather of rebellion, which had been raised against it from certain quarters. He did not mean rebellion in the usual sense; he meant a rebellion of paper against gold, which had broken out in Scotland [a laugh]. At all events, if not rebellion, there was certainly a very marked seditious spirit manifested in the appeal that was made to to the Scotch to oppose the alteration of the law. But, he owned he had not looked with any degree of apprehension to this expression of feeling, principally because he had no great faith in the permanency of the resistance that would be made to it—an opinion which was justified by the returning symptoms of loyalty that began to exhibit themselves in the northern part of the kingdom. He was glad, however, to be able to vindicate his countrymen from any participation in the resistance which had been carried to such an extent in other quarters, notwithstanding the inflammatory suggestions which had been offered to their minds. This forbearance, he owned, might be attributable, not so much to the steady principle of loyalty, as to the blundering disposition of his countrymen; who, as that ancient historian said of them, "never rebelled at the right time" [a laugh]. The paper of England and Ireland was different. In the former, it was vitiated from various causes, and that vitiation had led to remedial measures: in the latter, the same difficulties had occurred several years ago; and the consequence was, that the circulation of the country was now restricted, and inadequate to meet the necessities of the country. Of all the Banks which existed at that time, only nine remained, and of these, few issued their own notes. The paper in circulation was that of the bank of Ireland, which was safe and unobjectionable, and therefore, in so far as the question related to the circulation of Ireland, no one could deny that it was good. Some new banks had lately been established, and they were constituted on the same principles as those of Scotland. He was not, however, an advocate for an excessive circulation of paper. He was no admirer of the principles of those modern philosophers who sat around him. He abhorred and detested them. He did not object to the principle of a gold currency, but he did not see that

there was any necessity for applying it to Scotland. The case of Ireland in 1799 had been alluded to; and he would say, that she had been greatly benefited by the conduct of her parliament in that instance; but in 1804, their act was overturned in a wanton manner, and another substituted, which permitted the re-issue of small notes —a re-issue totally uncalled for, except by those who were interested in the circulation of small paper. He was then in office, and was the only individual who had stood up in opposition to it. He had then stated, that in Ireland, a bank had been set up by an apothecary and a captain of dragoons. What might have been the capital of the apothecary he knew not; but the sale of the captain's commission was all that he could muster on the occasion. The consequence was, that in two years afterwards he saw an advertisement calling in their notes to the amount of 490,000*l.* The mischief produced by their failure, was incalculable. But though his early feelings were in favour of a metallic currency, he must consider well, before he gave his sanction to the intended measure, whether it would be possible to bring it into action without deranging the commercial system. Those who thought that the paper currency of Ireland and Scotland could be replaced by gold, without producing much inconvenience, were greatly deceived.

Sir *C. Forbes* considered the motion unnecessary and uncalled for. The system as it existed was quite satisfactory. The hon. member for Montrose had alluded to several publications on the subject, but he considered it below the dignity of the House to spend half hours and hours in discussing the merits of anonymous publications, whether signed by Malachi Malagrowther, or any other fictitious name. He had read none of them, and therefore could not be swayed by any thing the authors advanced. He would not, however, vote against the motion. He approved so highly of the plain, downright, John Bull statements of the chancellor of the Exchequer on most occasions, that he would not now oppose him, though he disagreed with him as to the necessity of the measure.

Mr. Alderman *Wood* considered that there was no necessity for inquiry with regard to Scotland. If the hon. baronet would change his sentiment, and vote with him, he would divide the House on the question. If an inquiry must be instituted, let it embrace the whole kingdom.

Mr. *T. Wilson* agreed, that where the system was admitted to be pure, it was unnecessary to institute an inquiry. It was not usual to call a man to the bar of the House for the purpose of inquiring into his good conduct. The argument of good conduct was the worst that could be made in support of the motion. The necessity of inquiry implied that something wrong was apprehended. Much injury had already been done to the English banks by the measures of the government; and the inquiry might inflict the same on the Scotch. It was, if he might use so homely an illustration, tantamount to giving a dog a bad name.

The motion was agreed to.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.] Mr. *Hume* rose, to make a motion to the House relative to the money taken by the dean and chapter of Westminster from the public, for admission to view the Monuments in Westminster abbey. He was induced to make the motion, in consequence of an item in the estimates, for a sum of money to the dean and chapter for cleaning those monuments. He understood, the annual revenue of that establishment amounted to 20,000*l.* and that the individuals who attended visitors through the abbey, instead of being paid out of that fund, were remunerated by fees which the public ought not to pay. That House had very properly voted several sums for the erection of monuments in Westminster abbey, for the purpose of perpetuating the actions of illustrious individuals who had rendered great services to the country; and he understood that large sums had been paid to the dean and chapter for permission to erect the monuments in the abbey. That being the case, he thought they ought to be open to the public for inspection. From a correspondence which had been put into his hands, it appeared, that the individuals appointed to superintend the collection of the money paid for admission, were the minor canons, among whom the money collected was divided. He believed that about fifty years ago the admission fee to the abbey was not more than a penny or twopence; a sum quite sufficient to keep out that description of persons who would be most likely to do injury to the monuments. His object was, to ascertain whether or not the dean and chapter had a right to demand money from the public for permission to view

monuments erected at the public expense. He had thought the dean and chapter would, by attending to the strong expression of public opinion upon the subject, have prevented the necessity of this motion. If it should turn out that the funds were not sufficient without the assistance of the admission fees to support the establishment, some arrangement might take place, but if it should turn out that that House or his majesty had no power to compel the dean and chapter to open the monuments to the inspection of the public, he should protest against granting a single shilling of the public money for permission to erect those monuments. He concluded by moving, for an account of the sums charged by the dean and chapter of Westminster for the admission of each visitor to view the public monuments in that abbey, the total amount received from that source in each year, for the last five years, and how the same has been appropriated.

Mr. Secretary *Peel* did not rise to oppose the motion, as he thought it fair that the House should be in possession of the information asked for. The hon. member, however, was in error, if he supposed that the dean and chapter of Westminster had any rights different from those of other deans and chapters. The House he believed, had no power to compel them to admit strangers to the abbey. He was also wrong in supposing that the fees for the admission of visitors were of recent origin. They had existed from very early periods, and instances might be found in the Record-office, of their being granted by patent; though, since the Restoration they had been granted during pleasure. In 1613, a patent was granted, which he had seen, to sir E. Phipps, sir R. Miller, and others, to collect the fees for shewing the monuments to visitors. At present the fees were divided among the minor canons and the choir. The amount of the income of the minor canons, who were obliged to attend about four months in the year, was about one hundred pounds per annum, and of this they drew about seventy pounds from the fees. The admission fee had been diminished, and was not at present more than was necessary to protect the monuments. The abbey was now opened three times a day to every body when divine service was performed; it was opened without any charge, at all seasonable times, to artists; and the admission fee had been reduced from 2*s*. to 1*s*. 3*d*. The total amount of the emoluments would be seen when the papers were produced. The hon. member was wrong if he supposed that the dean and chapter had not laid out any money in repairing the abbey. During the last twenty-five years, they had expended 53,627*l*. for that purpose; being on an average upwards of 2,000*l*. a year. During the last twelve years, 40,000*l*. had been applied to the repairs of the abbey, being more than 3,300*l*. per annum. This shewed that the dean and chapter had paid liberally for the maintenance of their magnificent abbey. They might mistake in demanding a sum for admission, but he was persuaded that they acted bona fide, and were sincere in their opinion, that such a sum was necessary to secure the safety of the monuments.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that when he was at Westminster school, Poets' corner and the aisle of the abbey, the only portion of the abbey which was viewed with interest, except by a person who might come to gaze about London for a few days, were open to the public. He thought the preferable mode would be, to have the abbey open, as it formerly was, to the public, and to appoint a guardian, whose duty it would be, to preserve the monuments from injury.

Mr. *W. Smith* thought, that as the public had paid considerable sums to the dean and chapter for permission to erect those monuments, upon which a large sum of public money had been expended, they ought to be open for inspection.

Mr. *Peel* said, it was a mistake to suppose, that the dean and chapter had received money for permission to erect the public monuments, although they occupied a considerable space in the abbey, for which individuals would pay.

Mr. *Baring* said, that if the rights contended for by the dean and chapter were pushed to their extent, they might as well shut up the abbey against the entrance of persons for the purpose of divine worship, contrary to the privilege which prevailed in every catholic country.

Mr. Alderman *Wood* said, that he knew an instance in which a member of that House, wearied with a dull committee, had gone to the Abbey and heard a good sermon, for which he paid nothing; but after it was over, he was asked for money to see the monuments. This, however, he refused, and there was no power to enforce it.

The motion was agreed to.

CRUEL TREATMENT OF CATTLE BILL.] Mr. R. Martin having moved, that the bill be read a second time,

The *Solicitor-General* objected to the bill, as being too general and indefinite in its enactments.

Mr. *R. Martin* defended the principle of the bill, and maintained the general accuracy of the statements he had made on a former occasion, as to the instances of cruelty practised on several animals, and what he had said of the cruelty practised in Oxfordshire towards a bull. It was true that the tongue had been torn out of the animal while alive; but it was not sent round on a plate, but on a piece of paper. The other cases of cruelty he had mentioned were also substantially correct. The case of the flaying of a dog alive was told him by a highly respectable magistrate. He thought he should have great reason to complain of the attorney-general, if he opposed the present bill; for it was in substance a copy of one which, on a former occasion, had been corrected and approved of by that learned gentleman. His object was, to place that faithful animal, the dog, on the same footing of protection with other domestic animals.

Mr. Alderman *Wood* said, he could not support the present bill, and thought he had reason to complain of the hon. member for having deserted his post the other evening when the flogging of men was under discussion. He trusted that when that question should next be agitated, the hon. member would favour the House with his attendance, and that he would not, in the mean time, expend all his sympathy upon dogs and cats, but reserve some portion of it for his own species.

Mr. *George Lamb* did not mean to charge the hon. member for Galway with venal motives; but he really thought the only person likely to be benefited by the reward to informers, was the hon. gentleman himself. He would oppose the bill, unless he could see that they were about to legislate upon some fixed principle, rather than upon isolated instances.

Mr. *Lockhart* approved of the principle of the bill, which had received the sanction of the legislature already, under the hon. member's auspices; but objected to any such extension of its principle as was intended by the present measure.

Mr. *Trant* opposed the bill, and moved, that it be read a second time this day six months.

Mr. *Warre*, although he had been a decided supporter of the other measures of the hon. member for Galway, could not give his vote for the present bill. He thought that as much had been done as the subject required, and that the hon. member ought to be satisfied without pressing other bills, for the protection of animals, on the consideration of parliament.

The amendment was agreed to, and the second reading put off for six months.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

Friday, March 17.

SCOTCH BANKS—SMALL-NOTE CURRENCY OF SCOTLAND AND IRELAND.] The Earl of *Liverpool* rose to move for a select committee, to inquire into the state of the circulation of Promissory Notes under 5*l*. in Scotland and Ireland. The question was put and agreed to. After which, the noble earl moved, "that the petitions presented upon this subject be referred to the committee."

Earl *Grosvenor* thought the proposed inquiry could now be of no service. His majesty's government, before they had announced any intention of interfering with the system, ought to have been fully informed; and he supposed that they must have had sufficient information. Why, therefore, was there now to be a select committee appointed to inquire into the subject? He believed that all this originated in the fears excited in the minds of ministers by a celebrated personage, no other than Malachi Malagrowther; but he did not think it wise to yield to those fears, or to enter into any discussion upon a subject on which full information had been obtained. Indeed, he thought the discussion should have been left to Bradwardine Waverley, from whose hands Malagrowther seemed to have received a full and satisfactory reply. His lordship then repeated his former arguments with respect to a summary remedy for compelling the payment of small notes, and thereby giving to the poor, for whose benefit these alterations were professed to be made, real and effectual security.

The Earl of *Liverpool* thought the objections of the noble earl to the appointment of a committee most extraordinary. At the commencement of the session, it

was announced that a bill was to be brought in for the suppression of one and two pound notes. When that announcement was made, a question was put to him, as to the intentions of the government to extend the measure to Scotland and Ireland. His answer was, that it was intended to do so, but not at the same time that it was to be carried into effect in England. It appeared, however, that there was, on the part of the people of Scotland, a general sentiment against the measure being extended to that country. What then, he would ask, was the best and most decorous course to be adopted? Why, to institute an inquiry into the facts, as to whether the bill ought to extend to Ireland and Scotland or not. Not having as yet heard any argument against the expediency of extending the measure to Scotland and Ireland, he thought the best mode was, to appoint a committee.

The Earl of *Aberdeen* said, that an experiment was about to be made for which he saw no necessity. The people of Scotland had made no complaint, and had suffered nothing from their Banking system. If they had suffered, or had complained, then it might have been proper to institute an inquiry. There was, on the contrary, a universal sentiment prevailing in Scotland against any alteration. He had not heard what was to be the object of the inquiry, nor any good reason for instituting it. If it was deemed expedient to revert to the state of things that had existed before the Bank Restriction act, would it not be the wisest way to wait until the experiment was first tried in England? But, if an opposite system had prevailed so long, and with such good effect in Scotland, he saw no cause why it should be disturbed. Under the present system the people of Scotland had prospered. He did not say that the whole of that prosperity had been caused by the banking system, but it had been cotemporaneous with it. If their lordships looked back for a century, they would find Scotland in a state of barbarism and disorder, and they would find at present, to use a strong phrase of a noble lord near him, that the people of Scotland were the best-conditioned people in Europe. He did not suppose this had been produced by their having one-pound notes; but the people were contented with them, and without some good reason he did not think it necessary to make any alteration. The experiment about to be tried for England would give difficulty enough if it succeeded, and he therefore thought it very unwise to increase the difficulty, by extending the measure to Scotland. He was sure the noble earl was the last man to adhere to any measure out of mere punctilio, and that he did not now propose the committee, because he had on a former occasion announced his intention of doing so. Under these circumstances he must express his regret that any committee was to be appointed.

Lord *Melville* said, his noble friend was under a mistake if he supposed that any measure was to be immediately introduced. The committee had, in fact, been appointed, and his noble friend should have made his objections on that motion. The question before their lordships was, to refer the petitions to that committee, and his noble friend could not surely object to that. There were many individuals who were totally unacquainted with the Scotch system of banking; and by having the committee, their lordships would have the details brought before them, and be better enabled to judge of the propriety of extending the measure to Scotland. His noble friend had hinted that the measure would be prejudicial if extended to Scotland; but he was sure the noble lords who were to compose the committee would not concur in recommending any measure which was not proper. It was quite a mistake to suppose that the committee would inquire into the stability of particular Scotch bankers; but it was due to those bankers to state, that they made no objection to a full inquiry into the effects of the system; in fact, they wished the inquiry to be made. At least, this good would result from the committee, that it would bring before their lordships, when the report should be made, all the details of the system, and satisfy them whether the measure should be adopted in Scotland or not.

The Earl of *Limerick* said, that being connected with Ireland, he would not shrink from giving his opinion as to the effects of extending the proposed measure to that part of the kingdom. He agreed with the noble earl who spoke last but one, in regretting that a committee should be appointed to consider of the propriety of extending the measure to Scotland and Ireland, when in those countries it was not at all called for. Where there was no disease, no remedy was required. Their lordships should wait to see the

effects of the measure in England, before they thought of extending it to Ireland. The consequences of agitating the question were already disastrous. By letters which he had that day received from Ireland, he had learnt that the markets had tumbled down 50 per cent, and no merchants were willing to become purchasers in consequence of the agitation of this question. The measure would be infinitely more mischievous in Ireland than in Scotland. In the latter country, a sovereign was hardly to be seen, but the paper circulation in Ireland was founded on what modern political economists considered the best of all possible principles, that of a metallic currency, for the notes might be immediately converted into gold. Ireland, as compared with England, was a poor country, in which the dealings were on a small scale, and the circulating medium should be of a corresponding character.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* would ask the noble earl opposite what was the professed object of this measure as applied to England, but to restore confidence? Now, he was at a loss to see how it could restore confidence; and hitherto it had only operated against restoring confidence. But how such a measure could be thought necessary to restore confidence in Scotland was what neither the noble earl nor any other person could take upon himself to say. In Scotland a perfect confidence already existed. The people of that country were universally satisfied with their banking establishment at Edinburgh. There was but one dissentient, and he was a retired goldsmith, who moved an amendment to the proposed motion, at a very large meeting there, to the effect that every dependence was to be placed on the wisdom of his majesty's government. He could not help being curious to know who this gentleman was who entertained so singular an opinion. He learned that he was a retired goldsmith, and therefore supposed that the habits of his life had produced this extraordinary attachment to a currency consisting of that metal. It reminded him of a story told by Dr. Johnson, in one of his pamphlets. The doctor, in describing the effect of habit on mankind, related an anecdote of a retired tallow-chandler, who, on selling his business, stipulated that he should be allowed to attend his old shop on melting-days. As to the appointment of a committee, it appeared to be objected to, both by those who were for, and who were against the measure, though their arguments were very different. The noble earl behind him (Grosvenor) was for ministers going forward with the measure without any committee. He would not have them flinch an inch. His noble friend opposite (the Earl of Aberdeen), on the contrary, was against a committee, because he thought the measure ought not to be adopted; and in this view he confessed he agreed with his noble friend. It seemed to be supposed that the Scotch bankers had a particular advantage in the system that existed in that country. Unquestionably, men would not employ their capital in trade but with a view of deriving profit from it. It was clear, however, that the Scotch bankers would have more profit if they were to follow the English mode of doing business, and give no interest to their customers. If, therefore, they joined in the petitions, it must be from a conviction of the advantage of the system to the country. But it was the people of Scotland who were to be considered — that people who had grown up to prosperity with the system now in practice: it was to inquire what the effects of the measure would be upon them, and not upon the bankers that the committee would be appointed. He was sure that whatever evidence was produced before the committee would only show the advantage of the present system in Scotland; and, perhaps, they would furnish the noble earl with some useful hints how to new model the banking establishment of this country; instead of inducing him to cram down the throats of Scotchmen the system pursued here.

The Earl of *Liverpool* was surprised that the noble lord should persist in objecting to all inquiry. He now, it seemed, thought it would be more dignified in ministers to do that which he had often accused them of doing; namely, come forward with a measure, and force it down the throats of parliament. With respect to what a noble earl had said on the subject of Ireland, he was astonished at the nature of his argument; for, if it was true that Scotland had been benefited by her banking system, surely the same thing could not be said of Ireland. The noble earl could not say that that country had not suffered by the failure of banks; for certainly no country had suffered more in that way than Ireland.

It would be no answer to this to say, that a new banking system was established in Ireland. Whatever advantage might be derived from that system, it was as yet an experiment. The question, therefore, as it respected Ireland and Scotland, stood upon different grounds. But, as it related to Scotland, he begged noble lords would go into the inquiry fairly. The question of the banking system of Scotland was not to be considered with reference to its general operation on the people only, but more particularly to its effect on the commercial part of the community. Now, if their lordships looked at the commercial embarrassments which had occurred during the last five, ten, or fifteen years, it would be found that Scotland had suffered as much as England. How far this was connected with her banking system, he did not mean to stop to inquire. But there was another question. Could the Scottish system go on under the existing state of things? Could their lordships say, that it was possible to support one system in one part of the United Kingdom, and another in the other? It was necessary that the system should be the same in both countries. It was said, however, by the Scotch, "Keep your English system, and let us have ours, under which we have so long flourished; or, if you will assimilate the two, why not adopt the Scotch system for England?" But the real question was, could Scotland, in financial concerns, do without England? When distress occurred, could the Scotch merchants find relief without coming to England? Could they manage their affairs without depending on the Bank of England? Would they, in moments of difficulty, never call for sovereigns from that Bank? Then, indeed, let them have their own system! But if this was not the case—if both Scotland and Ireland must lean upon the Bank of England—if, in periods of difficulty, the commercial classes of those countries must come to this for relief—then assimilation was necessary. Connected together as the countries were, where an alteration of the banking system was made in England, it seemed to be at least proper to inquire, whether it would not be necessary to make a similar alteration in Ireland and Scotland. This was the great point of the subject; and he had stated it in order that his noble friend might turn his mind to it. The question was, whether Scotland was in so secure a state, that, happen what might, she was perfectly safe. If that should turn out to be the case, then she ought to be left to manage her own banking affairs as she chose.

The Earl of *Lauderdale* said, that the noble earl supposed a case of necessity arising for applications from Scotland for commercial relief, either by Exchequer-bills or advances from the Bank. Now, if it were not for the noble earl's new mode of management, how would his argument stand? In a period of commercial distress, the people of Scotland had just as good a right to apply to government for relief as the people of England. Thus his whole argument arose out of his own practice. In the present period of distress he had granted relief, by guaranteeing the Bank [The earl of Liverpool, "No."] Well, then, if the noble earl had not guaranteed, he had induced the Bank to make advances; and upon that the essence of his argument was founded. The people of Scotland must, of course, come to the Bank of England for gold. If the bankers in Scotland possessed Bank of England notes, they had only the same right to call for payment as the bankers of France had; and that was all that they wanted. As to the banks of Scotland leaning on the Bank of England, there was no such leaning, and no occasion for it; but they must come to the Bank of England for gold as long as the noble lord chose to allow that body to possess exclusive privileges.

The Duke of *Athol* deprecated partial discussion, and thought their lordships ought to defer their observations until they had the report of the committee.

Lord *Clifden* approved of the measure, and thanked ministers for getting rid of the small notes. No idea could be formed of the misery of the people of Ireland when the country banks failed in the years 1819 and 1820. In those years nine Irish country banks broke; and one in Dublin. It was of great importance to prevent those country banks from springing up again. There were now established in Ireland new banks, consisting of numerous wealthy individuals, which he hoped would be found to work well. For his own part, he felt an extreme horror of one-pound notes; and thought it must cause distressing sensations in every feeling mind, to reflect on the great sacrifice of human life which these notes had occasioned.

The Earl of *Carnarvon* could not see any insuperable obstacle to the establishing of chartered banks within a limited distance of the metropolis. It did not appear that there had been any offer of compensation made to the Bank of England to induce it to relinquish this portion of its privileges; and no one could suppose that the Bank would gratuitously make the country a present of this boon. The present proceeding was a most extraordinary one: for after applying this measure to England, without having made any inquiry as to its expediency, it was now proposed to lump Scotland and Ireland together, and to inquire whether it would be expedient to extend it to those countries. Besides, was it a proper season for agitating this question, when credit was in a ticklish state, and confidence in a great degree destroyed? Instead of disturbing the public mind by this alarming proposition, it would have been more politic to have had recourse to some healing expedients. He conceived it would have been much better that this inquiry should have been conducted before a committee of the whole House; for when he saw that the committee selected for this investigation consisted of nearly the same persons who constituted the committee in 1819, he was afraid there was little probability that the paper system would have a fair chance before such judges, as he had no doubt that these Midases would resolve to extract bullion blossoms from Caledonian thistles. Why the House should be called upon to alter the currency of Scotland, when no human being had complained that that currency did not work well in practice, he could not conceive. At any rate, the committee ought not to have been a select one, but a committee of the whole House.

Lord *Ellenborough* agreed in thinking that it would have been better to have referred this measure to a committee of the whole House. Had that been done, the consequence must have been the abandonment of it at least for one year. But the whole proceeding struck him as a most extraordinary one; for their lordships had, in a few days, without any inquiry, determined upon the adoption of this measure for England, and now it was proposed to inquire how far it might be advisable to extend it to Scotland and Ireland; when, in point of fact, unless it was extended to these two countries, it must be wholly ineffectual for England. Therefore, if the noble earl was determined to press this measure, it would have been more candid and statesman-like for him to have proposed the extension of it to Scotland and Ireland at once, without going through the useless ceremony of an inquiry.

The motion was then agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, March 17.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES — CIVIL CONTINGENCIES.] The House having resolved itself into a committee of supply, Mr. Herries moved, "That 200,000*l.* be granted for defraying the charge of civil contingencies for the year 1826."

Mr. *Hume* said, that the estimate for the present year was on the same extravagant scale as those for the preceding years. In his opinion, the rate of expense was unnecessarily large, nor was the country in a condition to bear so enormous a charge as that of half a million annually for the expenses of her ambassadors abroad. From the year 1818 to the present moment, the exorbitant charge for the pay and expenses of our diplomatic department had been progressively increasing. In 1824, there had been a vote for the service of our embassies to the amount of 320,178*l.* and in 1825, the sum was increased to 326,416*l.* There was a charge of no less a sum than 73,861*l.* for extraordinary expenses of ambassadors; 19,260*l.* for their outfit; and 6,401*l.* for presents. There was an increase upon the present vote of 60,000*l.* for missions to South America; and 40,000*l.* for consuls to that country, making, in the whole, an additional expense of 100,000*l.* By a paper which had been laid before the House only this morning, it appeared, that there was a charge of 79,000*l.* for consuls generally, and 11,000*l.* for consuls to the Levant. The vote now proposed to the House did not correspond with either of these sums. He did not disapprove of our embassies to South America; but both the number and expenses of those to the European courts ought to be reduced. The government ought not to continue such expensive embassies to the minor courts of Europe, which had no influence upon the general politics of the larger kingdoms, and which had not any commercial relations with Great Britain or its dependencies. He thought it would be quite sufficient for England to keep merely

a consul in Switzerland, at the rate of charge incurred in 1792. He had not only to protest against the extremely high rate at which we paid the salaries of our ministers abroad, but he had more especially to object to the exorbitant charges under the head of extraordinary disbursements. He would take, as a proof of what he asserted, the charges made for expense of our minister at Paris. He found, on referring to the estimate, a charge of 17,570*l.* under the head of extraordinaries, whilst there was an additional charge of 13,000*l.* for salary. If to these sums were added the various other allowances, it would be found that the annual expenses of our ambassador at Paris alone, amounted to 50,000*l.* This was more than the whole of the Civil list of the United States of America. In the year 1792, the whole expenses of this country for the pay of ambassadors, and for every species of diplomatic service, amounted to only 185,000*l.*, whilst, in the present year, the charges amounted to half a million sterling. He knew that it was a doctrine of the Treasury benches, that it was necessary to grant liberal salaries and high rewards, in order to get the public service ably and zealously performed. It was saying very little for the public spirit and honour of the gentry of England, to declare that the momentum of their public exertions was the money they could extract from the pockets of the people. For his part, he had no hesitation to declare his belief, that in the proportion as the salaries of public servants were advanced above what was absolutely just and necessary, was the public service injured by an inefficient performance of official duties. Whenever the emoluments of public situations were large, beyond the duties to be performed, appointments would be granted as matters of patronage, and other qualifications than talents would be deemed the adequate, if not the only, pretensions to office. But, reverting to the items of charge in the estimates, he found every thing on a scale corresponding to this extravagant establishment of our minister at Paris. There was one charge which had been made in a former year, for the purchase of an hotel, for the residence of our ambassador at Paris. The sum was above 30,000*l.*; and when he had objected to such an extravagant proceeding, he was told from the Treasury benches, that the incurring of this expense would hereafter save the country the cost of providing a temporary residence for our ambassador, and that in future the extraordinary disbursements of this embassy would be trifling. But he now found an item in the estimates of the present year of 12,000*l.*, for "repairs to the hotel of the British embassy at Paris." The government thus went on improvidently increasing their expenditure from year to year, and unless the House interfered to check such extravagance, they would soon have the charge of our embassy to France amount to 50,000*l.* per annum. In 1792, our diplomatic expenses in France amounted to only 9,000*l.* per annum, including extraordinary disbursements and incidental expenses of every description; and in 1822 they amounted to 14,555*l.* Our expenses for the Russian Embassy were 14, 535*l.* The salary of our minister at Vienna was 12,000*l.* and other expenses made his account amount to 14,000*l.* At the Hague our minister cost the country 14,189*l.*, and at Berlin the charge was 8,000*l.* We paid for the salary and extraordinary expenses of our ministers to the two Sicilies 7,200*l.* Could any man pretend that there was any utility in keeping up such an establishment at such a court? In Sweden we incurred an annual expense of 5,300*l.*; in Denmark, 5,800*l.* These sums were for permanent pay, exclusive of extraordinary charges and disbursements. The court of Wurtemburgh was of no political importance whatever; and he would put it to the House, whether the country ought to be put to an annual expenses of 4,619*l.* for a minister to such an insignificant court? In Tuscany, the salary of our minister, independently of extraordinary expenses, was 3,900*l.*, and the same charge was made for the court of Saxony. The government ought to reduce the expenses of our ministers at these minor courts, more especially as they were so constantly augmenting the expenses of our ministers at the principal capitals of Europe, and we were now exposed to the expenses of our embassies to South America. There was a charge of 3,277*l.* for extraordinary expenses at Vienna, in addition to a similar charge of 17,000*l.* in France; 775*l.* in Russia; 374*l.* in Prussia, and 1,034*l.* in Sweden. Independently of salaries, we were thus going on gradually increasing our extraordinary expenses year after year, until we had already swelled the account to the enormous sum

of 373,861*l.* exclusive of outfits and presents.

Mr. Secretary *Canning* said, he would endeavour to follow the hon. member, not, indeed, through all the items which he had gone into with such laborious accuracy, but through the prominent objections which he had made to the estimates before the House. He would confess that the hon. member had made his different objections with perfect candour and fairness, and he would meet him in a similar spirit. He must also confess, that he felt no little surprise that the hon. member should be so entirely dissatisfied with the present consular system; for it might be considered as a child of his own, an offspring of his particular fancy. When he (Mr. Canning) came last into office, he found that the opinion of the House had been taken upon the subject of the system to be pursued, in relation to our ministers abroad. Whether the opinion had been expressed in a formal vote, or given in a way which only conveyed the sense of the House, he was not quite sure, but he found that he had no discretion to exercise, for it had been determined, that the whole system relative to our consuls should be done away, and that they should be put upon a totally different footing. The new principle was, that fees should be entirely abolished, and that salaries should be substituted, to the extent of affording a remuneration for their loss. He begged leave to state, that his own individual opinion did not concur in this arrangement. But he found the point already settled, and his business was only to carry it into execution. Had the point been left to his judgment, or could his opinions have had any influence upon the question, he should have expressed an opinion that there were many cases in which it would be better to remunerate for services by fees, than by salary. But government had only to follow a prescribed principle; namely, that all private charges were abolished, and remuneratory salaries were to be granted in their stead. With respect to settling this arrangement, he had attended to the subject himself; and of all the difficult jobs he had ever undertaken this was the most difficult. He had to hear the private cases of individuals, and, what was most painful, he had to settle how much this man's income had been abridged, how much the other man had sacrificed; and these points ascertained, he had to settle the degree of compensation. The task of shooting in a crowd without seeing the victim—of dealing out in detail the sentences of execution pronounced in the gross — was, he could assure the House, far from a grateful one. As far as he had yet proceeded, he had received every day remonstrances against the system. In the course of the last three years, he had received applications on the subject from all parts of the world. These he had answered, and he would state the result to the House. The burthens to which trade had been subjected, in the amount of fees at different out-ports, according to the returns he had received, were 61,120*l.* This might be somewhat more, for he had not yet received all the returns; but he calculated that 70,000*l.* would cover every thing. The hon. gentleman's system was, that this should be taken from the trade, from the private merchants, and put upon the country. He (Mr. Canning) was not called upon to approve of this system, nor to say that the details of trade could not bear the burthens in detail which grew out of it. The system adopted was no decision of his. When this sum was placed to the public account, it necessarily followed, that a proportionate increase of charge would appear upon the estimates. And now he could not help saying, that he thought it a little hard that the hon. gentleman should complain of this as an enormous charge upon the public. It would also be in the recollection of the House, that when the Levant company surrendered their charter, all fees were abolished, and the public were consequently bound to pay a sum of 20,000*l.*, which had been thus relinquished. The salaries of consuls were 50,000*l.* and upon the old system, which was to be continued this year, as the Levant company had surrendered their charter only last year, the salaries of the Levant consuls were 11,000*l.* The extraordinaries were 18,000*l.* which made the whole expense 79,000*l.*; but against this was to be placed 30,000*l.* which was always paid out of the Civil List, thus leaving the whole sum voted for the expense of consuls, 49,000*l.* by which there was a clear relief to the public of 12,000*l.* This was the explanation which he had to give with respect to the salaries of consuls. With respect to the consuls who had been recently appointed to South America, there was much greater difficulty, owing

to the peculiarities of the countries in which they were established. He had endeavoured to feel his way in the best manner he was able, and had procured returns of the expenses on all subjects, in order to shape the establishments as much like those of Great Britain as was possible. The House would, however, be aware that it was not easy to do this with respect to a country in which a man might buy a horse for a dollar which would cost him two guineas to get shod. He, however, had given the subject the closest attention, and, where it was possible, fixed the salaries upon a permanent footing. The consuls to Buenos Ayres and Colombia, he had placed upon the same scale with ambassadors to second-rate European states. With respect to the European missions, they were precisely on the scale which had been sanctioned by parliament in 1816, excepting where they had been reduced. Those of Switzerland, Frankfort, and Saxony, offered an opportunity for reduction, and that opportunity had been embraced. But, to carry the principle so far as to withdraw missions from countries in consequence of what might be supposed to be their insignificance, was a measure which he could neither see the justice nor the policy of, and which he was surprised to hear advocated by the hon. gentleman. It had never been the principle of this country to neglect the minor independent governments of the continent; and, although he did not pretend to foresee the events which the future might produce, he did not believe that the time would ever arrive when this country would have to regret that she had held up heads which circumstances had contributed to lay low. On the contrary, he was more disposed to think, that those governments contained in themselves the seeds of future prosperity, perhaps, of future glory. However that might be, he could assure the House that he had adhered to the scale of 1816, and had in no way interfered with the establishments alluded to, but to reduce them. But, from generals the hon. gentleman had proceeded to particulars, and complaining that the embassy to France had cost 30,000*l.* during the last year, he had argued that it was likely in the next to amount to 50,000*l.* and that it might go on in a progressive ratio. He was sure the fallacy of this method of putting the case must have occurred to the hon. gentleman, and that he would not, upon reflection, insist that the annual amount ought to be stated at the sum he had mentioned. He would, however, confess that the item for the repairs of the ambassadorial dwelling was one which required explanation. In order to understand the affair, it would be necessary that the House should know exactly the history of it. In 1814 it had been thought advisable to purchase a house for the residence of our ambassador in France, and the purchase had accordingly been concluded at 30,000*l.* During the last five or six years, a considerable sum had been expended on the repairs of the house. In the civil contingencies for 1824, the sum of 5,000*l.* was voted for that purpose. That circumstance had called his attention to the subject, and he suggested to the Treasury to send a person to survey the house, and to report whether any, and what repairs were required. Mr. Smirke was despatched to Paris by the Treasury, and his report was, that such another house was not to be got in all that capital, and his estimate of the expense of the repairs necessary was between 5,000*l.* and 6,000*l.* On this report, the Board of Works were ordered to undertake these repairs. The Board, however, sent over another surveyor, Mr. Wyatt, to look at the house, and he reported that the expenses of the repairs would be 16,000*l.*, and of new furniture 7,000*l.*, making altogether 23,000*l.*, to do the whole in an English workman-like manner. Upon receiving this report, he directed that the house should be sold, and orders were sent to Paris to dispose of it, if it could be done to advantage. The report which was received from Paris on this subject was discouraging. In the first place, during the last twelve years, the value of such a house as the one in question had exceedingly augmented in Paris on account of their number having decreased. The hiring of a new house would, it was found, be attended with very great expense. In one instance 150,000 francs per annum were demanded, and the lowest rent asked was 9,000 francs per month. Then again there was another consideration of some importance connected with the selling of the ambassador's hotel. He received remonstrances from persons of all parties in France, who were favourably disposed towards England, against the selling of the house. These persons represented to him that it was a matter of political importance that the

house should not be sold—it would, they said, look like a wish to break off our connexion with France. There could be no doubt, that the most unpleasant construction would have been put on the proceeding. This imaginary grievance should not, however, have stood in the way of the disposal of the house, if that could have been done with any chance of advantage; but it was quite clear that, by selling the hotel, and hiring another, we should have incurred a much greater expense than by keeping of the present establishment. Under these circumstances, he directed that the hotel should be repaired, under the direction of Mr. Wyatt, who was restricted to the expenditure of 12,000*l.* He was well aware that Great Britain did not want any accidental claim to the consideration of France; but he could assure the House that very great importance was attached to the circumstance of our having an ambassadorial hotel in Paris. Russia was the only nation, excepting England, which had an establishment of that kind in the French capital, and if ours were removed, the influence of Russia would be thereby increased.—The hon. member had alluded to the increase in the estimates under the head of extraordinaries. He would explain how that had happened. The House was aware that in the course of last year an embassy was sent to congratulate the king of France on his accession to the throne. The duke of Northumberland, who was appointed his majesty's representative on the occasion, stipulated that he should pay all the expenses of the admission out of his own pocket. But, on the one hand, though it was very public-spirited in the noble duke to make this stipulation, it was not thought right that the public and the sovereign should be served entirely gratuitously. It was resolved, therefore, that his majesty should present the noble duke with some part of his equipment, which might remain in his family, and go down to posterity as a memorial of the event. A diamond sword, value 10,000*l.* (certainly not a fourth part of the expense which the noble duke incurred), was given to his grace by his majesty. This item had swelled the amount of the extraordinaries.—He believed he had now touched upon every point which the hon. member had alluded to. With respect to the old diplomatic appointments, he could state, that he had adhered to the scale recommended by parliament in 1810, or if he had departed from that scale, it was only to diminish expense. With respect to South America, he could not pretend to account for every item of expense. Much that was done there was in the nature of trial and experiment. As to the consular establishments, he had executed the purpose of the House to the best of his power. He had, he thought, done right in taking the whole amount of the fees, and distributing them among the consular establishments, by which he had effected a saving to the public of 12,000*l.* a-year.

Mr. *Baring* objected to the principle upon which government now appointed consuls, prohibiting them from engaging in trade, and allowing them fixed salaries for discharging the specific duties assigned to them. He preferred the old system of such appointments, whereby the principal merchant of a trading port, such as Amsterdam, was the consul. Such an individual was much better qualified to sustain the necessary state and hospitality of a consul, not a merchant, and with a salary of perhaps 600*l.* a-year.

Mr. *Canning* said, that at Rotterdam and one other place, our consuls were eminent merchants; because they had been so previously to their being appointed, and it was not thought proper to extend the general principle which government had found themselves obliged to lay down, to those individuals. Before he sat down, he would inform the House, that our ambassador at Paris, lord Granville, actually expended at least double his salary out of his private fortune.

Mr. *Ellice* agreed that it would have been unwise to make the selection of consuls from amongst the mercantile body originally; but he thought that in future merchants might be better calculated than others to discharge the duties of consuls, especially when under the control of ambassadors.

Mr. *Hume* again adverted to the repairs of the ambassador's house at Paris, and said that the sum expended for that purpose was an instance of shameful extravagance. He understood that the hotel was fitted up in as splendid a style as any house in London. [Mr. Canning said, "Very well."] It was not very well, but very ill. He could see no end of the extravagance. He thought some of the young persons who were in the suite of the ambassadors, and were learning the science, might do the duty of consul-

generals, and thereby save expense to the country.

The resolution was agreed to.

Mr. *Wilmot Horton* then rose to move the Colonial Civil Estimates. He trusted that there were none of them which could meet with serious objection. It would be seen that a decrease had taken place of 16,000*l.* since last year in the colonial estimates; and he had no doubt that a still greater reduction would soon be effected. In the civil establishment of Bermuda, a small increase had taken place, owing to the transition from war to peace, and the consequent falling-off of its revenues, which, during the former period, from its being much frequented by vessels of all descriptions, had been very considerable. With regard to Newfoundland, there could scarcely be said to be any charge upon this country, as there was a sum remitted from that quarter equal to the amount in the estimate. The estimate for New South Wales was only half of what it had been last year, and he trusted that that colony would soon be in a situation to relieve this country from any charge. The charge of the convicts would still have to be paid by this country; but he hoped only for a few years. There was a great demand for their services among the settlers, and some arrangement might be entered into with them for defraying the expense which was now charged on this country. With respect to Sierra Leone and the African forts, if it was deemed proper to maintain them in their present state, they must of course be paid for. In the expense of these two items there had been a decrease since last year. The vote for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was one of the greatest utility. The whole patronage had formerly been vested in the Secretary of State, but he had divested himself of it, from a sense, that an ecclesiastical board, with the power of examination, would make the appointments with much more propriety. The affairs of the society were now conducted by this board; and he could not think that any reasonable objection could be made to the estimate. As for the canals of Canada, there was a sum of 10,000*l.* for one, and 5,000*l.* for another. These canals had been examined by commissioners, who had reported them to be most useful. This would readily be believed, seeing that they formed a water communication between Upper and Lower Canada. With respect to the Indian presents, these, although useful for a time, certainly proceeded upon no very sound principle, as it taught these people to look to them instead of relying on their own resources. It was intended, therefore, gradually to reduce them, until they were put an end to altogether.

Mr. *Hume* expressed the high gratification which he had received from the statement just made by the hon. secretary. He was quite satisfied that, if the same prudent line of policy was persevered in for a few years, the country would be entirely relieved from the charge made for the civil establishment of these colonies. As long as this country consented to pay for them, it could not be expected that any diminution would take place. It was not consistent with human nature to expect that such would be the case. He considered the whole sum to be pure waste, and yet he saw no reason why the hand of retrenchment should not be applied to them in a gradual, but effectual manner.

The resolutions were agreed to.

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